

PSALM 127

A song of Ascent

1. Blessed are all that fear the Lord, who walk in his ways.
2. You shall eat the fruit of your labor. You are blessed, and are honorable.
3. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within the enclosure of your house, your children like newly planted olive trees around your table.
4. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.
5. Bless you the Lord of Sion, and you will see the goodness of Jerusalem all the days of your life.
6. And you will see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel.

This is the ninth psalm of Kathisma XVIII. It is read near the completion of the Arrabona [engagement] portion of the Wedding Service.

Psalms 119 and the following psalms through Psalm 133 are titled *Songs of Ascent* [Ὁδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν] because they were sung by the Hebrews as they ascended up the mount to Jerusalem on their high holidays when this journey was a pilgrimage for them to the Temple. All of these psalms are read during the Kathismata of the Presanctified Liturgy as a sign of our ascent through Great Lent to Pascha.

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Come then, let us apply in each case the law of Christ. "He that says to his brother, you fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. He that has looked on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her. Unless one humble himself as the little child, he shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

But none of these things do they consider. Now it is proper to quote the prophet Jeremiah and say, "Be astonished, O Heaven, and be horribly afraid, O earth, to what great brutality has the race of man been madly carried away!"

Bearing in mind all these things, and considering the ten thousand talents, let us at least hence hasten to remit to our neighbors their few and trifling debts. For we too have an account to give of the commandments wherewith we have been trusted, and we are not able to pay all, no not whatever we may do. Therefore God has given us a way to repayment both ready and easy, and which is able to cancel all these things, that is not to be revengeful.

Compiled by John P. Nasou, M.D.

SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ὁ Ναός τῆς Αγίας Σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

August 8, 2010

Eleventh Sunday of Matthew

The Tone for this day is the Second

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 11

John 21:15-25

At that time when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me." Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" So the saying spread abroad among the brothers¹ that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

PROKEIMENON:

**The Lord is my strength and my song.
The Lord has chastened me sorely.** Psalm 32: 22 + 1

The Epistle is from St. Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians 9:2-12

BRETHREN, you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to food and drink? Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock, without getting some of the milk?

Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does He not speak entirely for our sake? It is written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do we not still more? Nevertheless we have not made use of this right; but we endure anything, rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

The Reading is from Matthew 18:23-35

THE LORD SAID THIS PARABLE: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailors, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to everyone of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

St. John Chrysostom's Homily On This Day's Gospel

Wherefore He went on to say, "The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, he commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and his children, and all that he had. Then after this man had enjoyed the benefit of mercy, he went out, and "took by the throat his fellow-servant, which owed him an hundred pence and having by these doings moved his lord, he caused him to cast him again into prison, until he should pay off the whole.

Do you see how great the difference is between sins against man and against God? As great as between ten thousand talents, and a hundred pence, or rather even much more. And this arises both from the difference of the persons, and the constant succession of our sins. For when a man looks at us, we stand off and shrink from sinning; but when God sees us every day, we do not forbear, but do and speak all things without fear.

And if you desire to learn how our sins against Him are ten thousand talents, or rather even much more, I will try to show it briefly. But I fear lest to them that are inclined to wickedness, and love continually to sin, I should furnish still greater security, or should drive the meeker sort to despair, and they should repeat that saying of the disciples, "who can be saved? For they that are incurably diseased, do not depart from their own carelessness, and wickedness; and if they derive greater occasion for contempt, the fault is in their insensibility.

Let me set forth the good deeds of God to us. He created us when we were not, and made all things for our sakes that are seen, Heaven, sea, air, all that is in them, living creatures, plants, seeds. Into us alone of all that are on earth He breathed a living soul such as we have, He planted a garden, He gave a help-mate, He set us over all the brutes, He crowned us with glory and honor.

After that, when man had been unthankful towards his benefactor, He vouchsafed unto him a greater gift. For consider that He cast him out of paradise, but mark also the gain that arose from this. For after having cast him out of paradise, and having wrought those countless good works, and having accomplished His various dispensations, He sent even His own Son for the sake of them that had been benefited by Him and were hating Him, and opened Heaven to us, and unfolded paradise itself, and made us sons, the enemies, the unthankful. And He gave us also a baptism and a deliverance from vengeance, and an inheritance of a kingdom, and He promised numberless good things on our doing what is right, and stretched forth His hand, and shed abroad His Spirit into our hearts.

What then? After so many and such great blessings, what ought to be our disposition; should we indeed, even if each day we died for Him who so loves us, make due recompense, or rather should we repay the smallest portion of the debt? How then are we disposed, whose disposition ought to be like this? Each day we insult His law. But don't be angry, if I let loose my tongue against them that sin, for not you only will I accuse, but myself also.

How many robberies are there with them! How many frauds! How many false accusations, and meannesses! How many servile flatteries!

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