

PSALM 129

A Song of Ascent

1. Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord.
2. O Lord, hearken to my voice; let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.
3. If Thou, O Lord, dost observe iniquities then who, O Lord, may exist?
 4. For with Thee there is reconciliation for Thy name's sake.
 5. I have waited for Thee, O Lord, my soul has waited for Thy word.
 6. My soul has hoped in the Lord, from the morning watch* till the night.
 7. Israel has its hopes upon the Lord, for mercy is in the power of the Lord, and plenteous is redemption within Him.
 8. And He shall redeem Israel from all of its iniquities.

This is the eleventh psalm within Kathisma XVIII.

It is a prayer for pardon and mercy and is read at all Vespers Services.

Psalm 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.

* Night was a treacherous time for the people of the ancient world and “watches” were established in order to detect any approaching attacks by nomadic groups. The Hebrews had divided the nocturnal watches into three equally spaced groups that began in the evening and ended with the morning light. During the Roman occupation they adopted the Roman practice of four night watches. In the wording of this psalm the placing of *the morning watch till the night* appears to ignore the proper sequence of evening to morning since there were no watches during the daylight hours. In the Septuagint and in the New Testament these were called φυλακῆς [filakís] which in Modern Greek has a different meaning, “jail.”

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SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ὁ Ναός τῆς Αγίας Σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

August 22, 2010

Thirteenth Sunday of Matthew

The Tone for this day is the Fourth

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 2

Mark 16:1-8

And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back--it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

PROKEIMENON: **O Lord, how magnificent are your works.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.** Psalm 103: 24 + 1

The Epistle is from St. Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians 16:13-24

BRETHREN, be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicos, because they have made up for your absence; for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men. The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. All the brethren send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. *If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.* Our Lord, come!* The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.
(* *Marana Tha* appears in the Greek text, here translated as *Our Lord, come.*)

The Gospel Lesson is from Matthew 21:33-42

THE LORD SAID THIS PARABLE, "There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit; and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them. Afterward he sent his son to them, saying 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it was marvelous in our eyes?'"

**“If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be anathema.
Maran atha”**

“ει τις ου φιλει τον κυριον, ητω αναθεμα. μαραν αθα.”
What did St. Paul mean by this statement?

These words are from verse 22 of today's Epistle Reading (In the Revised Standard Version anathema is translated as "accursed.") On the surface it appears to be completely out of place as a teaching concerning our Lord Jesus Christ since it is void of the merciful words that He has usually offered to us. Since I could not find any explanation of these words in any Orthodox book by modern writers, I resorted to my most reliable source, St. John Chrysostom, and found that indeed it was addressed in his Homily XLIV.

“By this one word he strikes fear into all: those who made their members the members of an harlot; those who put stumbling blocks in the way of their brethren by the things offered in sacrifice unto idols; those who named themselves after men; those who refuse to believe the resurrection. And he not only strikes fear, but also points out the way of virtue and the fountain of vice, specifically that as when our love towards Him hath become intense, there is no kind of sin but it is extinguished and cast out thereby; but when it is too weak, it causes the same to spring up.”

These homilies of St. John “Golden Mouth” were translated and edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. (19th century scholar), and he provides his opinions as to the meaning of the great saint's words:

“Chrysostom gives correctly the object of this solemn utterance. It was surely to strike terror into all who by contentiousness, by profligacy, by covetousness, by litigiousness, by idolatry, by arrogance, or in any other way showed that they were destitute of love to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. For such there is no outlook in the future but perdition. But the answer to the other perplexing question, i.e. why the words *Maran atha* appear here is not so clear. The use of the East Aramæan term *Maran atha* is hardly to be accounted for by supposing that the Apostle wished to thwart the conceit of the Corinthians in their Hellenic language and wisdom. In the absence of any direct clew to the purpose it is well to consider that the Apostle, roused by the gravity of the occasion, could not satisfy himself without clothing it in the older and more sacred dialect the tremendous truth of which gave such a solemn weight to the “anathema.”