

PSALM 91

A Psalm as a song for the Sabbath Day.

- 1 It is good to offer thanks unto the Lord,
and to celebrate Thy name, O Most High.**
- 2 To proclaim Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth at night,**
 - 3 on a ten string psalterion*, with a song on the lyre.
 - 4 Thou, O Lord, hast delighted me by Thy workmanship,
and I rejoice in the deeds of Thy hands.
- 5 O Lord, how magnificent are Thy works! How exceedingly deep is Thy reasoning!
- 6 An imprudent man does not know this, and a foolish one cannot comprehend it.
- 7 Since the wicked are growing like grass, and the workers of iniquity
are destroying everything, thus they may all be annihilated forever.
 - 8 But Thou, O Lord, art the Most High forever.
 - 9 Yet behold Thine enemies, O Lord...behold, they shall perish,
and all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
 - 10 So may my horn be raised like that of a unicorn,
and my old age be plenteous with oil of olives.
 - 11 Thus my eye will look upon my enemies,
and my ear hear the wicked that rise up against me.**
 - 12 May the righteous blossom like the fig palm,
and proliferate like the cedars of Lebanon.**
 - 13 Those planted in the house of the Lord
shall bloom within the courtyard of our God.**
- 14 Thus they shall increase in their old age, and cheerfully declare that:
- 15 "The Lord our God is righteous, and there is no injustice within Him!"

* A "psalterion" is an ancient instrument, somewhat like the zither, that has survived to these days in Northern Greece and the Balkans. This word is derived from the ancient cultures when stringed instruments were played by strumming, a process named from the ancient Greek word for "palming the instrument." This word was applied to the poetical writings of the Jews that were accompanied with music on the lyre or psalterion. When the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek, the book of poetical writings was named "Psalmoi" from which the English word "Psalms" was derived. Therefore now we must be careful to precisely translate the word psalterion so as to differentiate between the musical instrument or the Book of Psalms. In this psalm the second instrument is "kithara" which referred to the ancient lyre, not the modern guitar.

This upbeat psalm is the first within the 13th Kathisma, filled with pleasant thoughts about God and the righteous. It is read in full at the midpoint of the First Hour of prayer and also at the Burial Service of a Priest. Verses 1 and 2 serve as the Alleluia Verses on Sundays of the 7th (Βαρυς) Tone; and verses 11 and 12 are the Alleluia verses in Liturgies conducted on Tuesdays and those commemorating St. John the Baptist or Martyrs. Verses 1, 2, and 13 serve as the verses for the First Antiphon on weekday services.

SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ἁγία Σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

November 15, 2009

Eighth Sunday of Luke

The Tone for this day is Plagial Two

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. One

Matthew 28:16-20

At that time the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Twenty-third Sunday Following Pentecost

PROKEIMENON: O Lord, save your people and bless Your inheritance.
To You, O Lord, have I cried: "O my God." Psalm 27: 9 + 1

The Epistle is from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:4-10

BRETHREN, God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God: not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

The Gospel is from Luke 10:25-37

AT THAT TIME, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Eighth Sunday of Luke

The Fast of the Nativity of our Lord begins today

It was customary throughout all of the early Christian communities to fast on the forty days before Christmas. This was done in recognition of the fact that Jesus was born to us in order to be sacrificed cruelly for our redemption. Orthodoxy has retained this pious practice, but in the western churches this has been supplanted by a period of partying and gaiety. It is difficult for our believers to go through this period without joining in these "Christmas Parties" but there are many who do and thus remain faithful to their beliefs.

We commemorate on this day

The Holy Martyrs and Confessors Gourias, Samonas, and Abibos

Gourias and Samonas suffered martyrdom under Emperor Diocletian and Duke Antoninus. Both of them were priests who were nurtured in Edessa. Gourias was a native of a small market-town named Sarkigeitnas and Samonas was a native of Ganades. They were accused of bringing assistance to imprisoned Christians, and they were summoned to appear before Duke Antoninus. Because they refused to sacrifice to idols, they were both suspended by one hand for five hours. Taken down, they persisted in confessing their faith and were suspended by the feet. They were thrown into a very dark pit and ended their martyrdom by the sword [+306].

Abibos was a deacon who was martyred in the time of Emperor Licinius on the charge of traveling through the villages and reading the Holy Scriptures to the faithful in order to bring them into the faith. Upon the Emperor's order, he was thrown into a red-hot furnace and thus obtained the crown of martyrdom [+222].

Compiled by John P. Nasou, M.D.