



When the Mother of God stood at the foot of the Cross, the depth of her grief was inconceivable, for she loved her Son more than anyone can realize.

And we know that the greater the love the greater the suffering.

By the laws of human nature, the Mother of God could not possibly have borne her affliction;

but she had submitted herself to the will of God, and the Holy Spirit sustained her and gave her the strength to bear this affliction.

And later, after the Ascension of the Lord, she became a great comfort to all God's people in their distress.

The Lord gave us the Holy Spirit, and the man in whom the Holy Spirit lives feels that he has paradise within him.

Saint Silouan the Athonite

**21 June 2015 is the
Third Sunday of Matthew**

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: Romans 5:1-10

Gospel: Matthew 6:22-33

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity. And when Thou didst also raise the dead out of the nethermost depths, all the powers in the Heavens cried out: O Life-giver, Christ our God, glory be to Thee.

Seasonal Kontakion:

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honour thee.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Romans 9:18-33; Matthew 11:2-15
Hieromartyr Eusebius; Martyrs Zenon and Zena

Tuesday: Romans 10:11-21; 11:1-2; Matthew 11:16-20
Martyr Agrippina; Martyr Aristocleus

Wednesday: Luke 1:24-25, 57-68, 76, 80; Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4; Luke 1:1-25, 57-68, 76-80
Nativity of John the Forerunner; Elizabeth, Mother of the Forerunner

Thursday: Romans 11:13-24; Matthew 11:27-30
Apodosis of the Forerunner; Prokopios the New Martyr

Friday: Romans 11:25-36; Matthew 12:1-8
Righteous David; Appearance of the Icon of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos of Tikhvin

Saturday: Romans 6:11-17; Matthew 8:14-23
Samson the Hospitable; Joanna the Myrrhbearer



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

21 June 2015

If Your Eye is Sound...

Today, on the third Sunday of Matthew, we hear Jesus Christ's challenging words in the Sermon on the Mount. He reminds us that we cannot serve both God and money, for, as He points out, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." And He then proceeds to remind us of the pointlessness of worrying about material things, for "your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."

We may be tempted to think that it is easy for Jesus to say this, and may think we have good reason to worry about material things. Moreover, we live in a society that seems to programme us to be concerned about what we will eat, or drink, or wear – or the size of our bank balance.

While we do need to take some concern for the matters of our earthly life, Jesus Christ goes to the heart of the matter by asking us who our true master is. Are we governed by our desires for wealth or success, whatever form they may take? Or are we governed by our desire for God, and for God's Kingdom?

The reality is that, for many of us, our hearts are divided as we seek to juggle the competing realities of our lives. The conflicting demands that we experience exist because we live in a fallen world, and the conflict that we experience in our hearts exists because our desires have also been affected by the fall and are in need to healing. The path to salvation that Christ calls us to involves the healing of this division within ourselves so that, "If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light."

The Fathers understood this to mean living out of an inner unity and integrity in which our desires are aligned to the will of God. It is about learning to live out of a single heart that is wholly given to God – not so much because we "must" and because God is a "master" who will otherwise punish us, but because this is the only way to find true freedom. For, as Saint John Chrysostom tells us, money is a far more tyrannical master than our true Master who cares for our every need.

Do not despise Christ's commandment of love, for it is the means whereby you can become a child of God.

Saint Maximus the Confessor



The Healing of Soul and Body

A series on the meaning of Holy Unction

We have seen that the Mystery of Holy Unction has been celebrated in the Church since the time of the Apostles and that it is rooted in God's desire to heal us from all our infirmities, both physical and spiritual. Sickness and suffering are part of the reality of our fallen world, as is the death that we still have to face. While Christ has conquered death, it nevertheless remains a reality that we still have to face. But we face it in a new way, knowing that it no longer has absolute power over us.



What if people are not healed?

Something similar is true of sickness and suffering. Although the Church prays for the sick to be healed, not everybody is healed physically. Sickness is not part of God's plan, but it is a reality in our sinful world. We do not know why some people are healed, while others are not and we should be careful not to draw easy conclusions about this. We are called to pray for the sick, but it is God who heals and we have no authority to claim things on His behalf.

Jesus Christ has transformed suffering

What we can say, however, is that spiritual healing is available to all those who open themselves to it. Very often we cannot see

how God heals people, nor do we know what is best for them. Suffering is a great mystery, but it is not a mystery to be "solved" in rational terms, but rather a mystery to be entered into and lived. And we can only do this because Jesus Christ has Himself accepted suffering on the Cross, transforming it from being something purely negative into something that can be redemptive. Jesus Christ does not necessarily remove suffering, but He does offer us a way to transform it into victory, just as His Cross has itself become the source of our healing.

We can therefore say that healing is open to all. However, it occurs in different ways and the ultimate healing for which we pray is that we may gain entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven.



Gratefulness on the part of the recipient spurs on the giver to bestow gifts larger than before....

The sick one who is acquainted with his sickness is easily to be cured; and he who confesses his pain is near to health.

Many are the pains of the hard heart; and when the sick one resists the physician, his torments will be augmented.

There is no sin which cannot be pardoned except that one which lacks repentance, and there is no gift which is not augmented save that which remains without acknowledgement.

Saint Isaac the Syrian

The Nativity of Saint John the Forerunner

On Wednesday, the Church commemorates the birth of Saint John the Baptist, the Prophet and Forerunner of the Lord.

We normally commemorate saints by the day of their death (and we also will commemorate his martyrdom on 29 August), so it may seem odd to also commemorate his birth. Indeed, the only other person whose birth we commemorate is that of the Holy Mother of God. And that fact in itself should tell us something, for both St John and the Theotokos are in a sense bridge figures between the Old and the New Testaments, and their births are important because they announce the beginning of something new.

The events of St John's birth are interwoven with St Luke's account of the news of the coming of Jesus Christ. The son who is given to the barren Elizabeth in some ways prefigures the Son who will be born of the Virgin Mary. Yet the Gospel is also very clear on the purpose of this relationship. The Forerunner's sole task is to prepare the way of the Lord. We see this in the events of his birth, and we also see it later in his preaching when he declares about Christ: "He must grow greater; I must grow less." (John 3:30)

Like Saint John, we too are called to prepare the way for the coming of Christ who continually comes to us and seeks to make His home among us. This does not mean drawing attention to ourselves, but should rather mean allowing the Light of Christ to shine through in our lives.



Today the great Forerunner comes from the barren womb of Elizabeth; the great Prophet of Prophets, whom none surpass in greatness. The radiant candlestick of the Light; the voice of the Word...

From Vespers for the Nativity of Saint John the Forerunner

No matter how long you might stay at the spring, you would always be beginning to see the water. For the water never stops flowing, and it is always beginning to bubble up again. It is the same with one who fixes his gaze on the infinite beauty of God. It is constantly being discovered anew, and it is always seen as something new and strange in comparison to what the mind has always understood. And as God continues to reveal himself, man continues to wonder...

Saint Gregory of Nyssa