

20th Week After Pentecost – Monday

Today's readings, followed by a few small pastoral and personal thoughts.

Philippians 2:12-16 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

Luke 6:24-30 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. 27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. 30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

Phil 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

It is quite easy to behave correctly when in the presence of authority. This action applies as much as the other things mentioned in yesterday's Gospel in which our Lord stated "Even sinners do". The test of a Christian is if he does good and is obedient when others are not present. Of course, we fool ourselves whenever we think we are alone, because God sees all, but nonetheless, our vanity and dishonesty goads us into attempting to appear more obedient, than we really are when we are with others, especially those who have some authority over us, or whom we wish to impress. This is in direct contradiction to the command of the holy apostle.

This desire is also shared by parents, pastors, and teachers. Whoever tries to instill in another person a sense of right and wrong, and attempts to enable them to be good feels this way. I often think about my flock, and wonder how they are doing during the day. You are all in God's hands, and my influence is but for only a short time each week (or even less than that!), so I console myself by praying for everyone in my small flock every day.

Phil 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

The Christian faith is active; it is change. God works in us to help facilitate the change, but we must WILL to change and DO according to this will (in this verse, the one doing the “working” is god, and we are doing the “willing” and “doing”). The scripture is full of admonitions and encouragements like this. The world may tell us that salvation is won without labor, but the scriptures tell us emphatically that we must labor!

Phil 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

This is the prayer of every pastor. I wonder often if my labors will be fruitful. There many times when I am tempted to doubt this, such as when the church is almost empty at the beginning of the liturgy, or when other services are sparsely attended. There are many other things also. I also wonder when I see great inconsistency in lifestyles, and wonder why is this so? Is it because of my sins, my weak faith, my poor prayers? This is a dangerous feeling, which I believe all pastors are prone to, some more, some less. I admit I have it, and there is only one solution: “physician heal thyself!” This is actually the only solution for all our troubles, and by this I mean that we must attempt with great vigor to change ourselves, with consistent prayer, fasting and obedience to the commandments. We must attempt to change before we can expect God to intervene, I try to apply this idea to my life, and teach it. The only reason for doubt is lack of faith, and we lack faith because we lack purity.

Luke 6:24-26 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets

All of this is an amplification of the thought I shared yesterday (St John Chrysostom’s teaching, in agreement with the whole church, that we will be rewarded with the reward we see, whether a temporary reward, or an eternal one, but never both)

Priest Seraphim, Oct 14/27 2008

http://www.orthodox.net/scripture/20th-week-after-pentecost_monday_philippians2:12-16+luke6:24-30.pdf
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