

Week of the Publican and Pharisee - WEDNESDAY

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

This week, we do not fast on any day. Most people would consider a non-fasting week to be a time to relax a little, because after all, we are not fasting; we can eat anything we want!

Some also erroneously feel that we are taking a “little break” before the arduous fast begins.

None of these ideas is correct. The church tells her children not to fast this week to underscore what truly saves a Christian. Fasting did not save the Pharisee, whom we read about just last Sunday. He fasted and tithed and prayed, but was not justified. The church services mention many times that he was not justified (made righteous, “saved” if you will) because of his pride, and the publican was saved because of his humility.

Some will foolishly believe that the fast free week tells us that fasting is not important, and is optional, because it did not save the Pharisee, and all we need do is be humble. Fasting, in and of itself, does not save, but we will *not be saved if we do not fast*. No less a luminary than St Seraphim of Sarov has said this, and an attentive listening to the services of the church underscores this point.

An athlete will not improve in his sport solely by eating certain food and abstaining from others that slow him down or make him get fat, but he WILL NOT improve if his diet is not optimal. So it is with fasting. It is *necessary* because of our nature, and its effect is to help us become more spiritual, and focus on the things that are needful.

This week we are taught what not to think – that fasting in and of itself saves. When the church teaches what *NOT to do*, she always tells us *what TO do*. This week, we are focusing on watchfulness and a sober attitude about our life, and the judgment.

This Sunday showed that humility saves. Always present with humility is watchfulness and a sober attitude.

We must read this Epistle and the Gospel with a spirit of watchfulness.

2 Peter 3:1-18 1 **This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:** 2 **That ye may be mindful of the words which**

were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: ³ Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, ⁴ And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. ⁵ For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: ⁶ Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: ⁷ But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ⁸ But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, ¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. ¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. ¹⁵ And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; ¹⁶ As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. ¹⁷ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. ¹⁸ But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Mark 13:24-31 ²⁴ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, ²⁵ And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. ²⁶ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. ²⁸ Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: ²⁹ So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. ³⁰ Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. ³¹ Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Bibliography

The Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St Mark, by Blessed Theophylact, published by Chrysostom Press - <http://www.chrysostompress.org/>. ALL FOUR BOOKS ARE HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

Priest Seraphim Nov 4/17 2008.

[St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas](#)

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