

20th Week After Pentecost – Thursday

TODAY'S READINGS, FOLLOWED BY A FEW SMALL PASTORAL AND PERSONAL THOUGHTS.

Philippians 3:1-8 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Luke 7:17-30 And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about. 18 And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. 19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. 22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. 24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? 25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appavelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. 26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. 27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. 29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

Luke 7:17-30 **And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about. 18 And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. 19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?**

Blessed Theophylact tells us that some of St John's disciples were jealous, having heard of Christ. These were still holding onto their allegiance to John, even though their leader had already said: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30) Sometimes people do not adapt well to change, and become enamored of a personality instead of the message that person is trying to convey. St John, being a wise pastor, wished to bring his disciples to the proper understanding. They may have believed him if he told them again of Christ, but a better and more sure way was to send them to Christ, so they could see for themselves.

A shallow perusal of this text may raise the doubt in some that St John's faith was weak. How can this be, since he was the one who leaped in the womb when he met Christ, who was in the womb of the Virgin, when she came to Elizabeth? (Luke 1:41). How can this be, since shortly after he prophesied to his followers that: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:13), when Christ came to him in the Jordan, he recognized the one of whom He had prophesied, and said with trembling: "have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matthew 3:14).

Luke 7:24 **And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?**

Some of the people who knew the St. John had sent messengers to Christ were scandalized, and our Lord is addressing this when he asks a series of questions beginning with "What went ye out to see". A reed in the wind bends whichever way the wind blows – this signifies inconstancy and weak faith.

Luke 7:28 **For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the**

kingdom of God is greater than he.

I know someone who was a pastor in a Protestant church who once discussed this passage with me. He was a reasonably scripturally literate, very sincere pastor. His incredible exegesis of this chapter, which he had obtained from his central church body, was that St John the Baptist was NOT in heaven and was not saved! His reasoning was that since the least person in the kingdom of God is greater than St John, he must not be in the Kingdom of God! This demonstrates how crazy scriptural exegesis can be outside of Holy Tradition.

Christ is excluded from those “born of women”, since the word here indicates a wife.

Priest Seraphim Oct 17/30 2008

http://www.orthodox.net/scripture/20th-week-after-pentecost_thursday_philippians3:1-8+luke7:17-30.rtf

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