

22nd Week After Pentecost – TUESDAY

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

Colossians 2:20-3:3 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, ²¹ (Touch not; taste not; handle not; ²² Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. ¹ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Luke 9:23-27 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ²⁵ For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? ²⁶ For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:23-27 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

It is interesting how one little word can really strengthen a thought. In this verse, the word *DAILY* stands out brightly as a challenge and a reminder. I have spoken many times about how the scripture can be used as a sort of mnemonic device (something which helps us remember the right way to think, act and live). It would be good to check ourselves *DAILY*: are we taking up our cross, or are we just going through our daily routine without thought, effort or purpose? Indeed, it would be good at least *hourly* to check on how we are bearing our cross this *day*, if indeed we are struggling at all.

A similar reading from St Mark is used on the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent (Mark 8:34-9:1).

One cannot understand what the Lord is saying unless he understands what he should *deny* for himself, and what the *talking up of the cross* means. This cannot be understood unless there is effort in the Christian life.

There have been many false interpretations of our Lord's command. Various heresies have taught that we must deny ourselves all pleasure or even cause ourselves pain and suffering (since, in taking up *our* cross, we must suffer as our Lord did on *His* cross) in order to be saved. Many have left the Lord's company, like those who heard His teaching about being the bread of life, because this command seemed incomprehensible and too difficult for them.

"Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? ... 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." John 6:60.66

All of the commands of our Lord can be understood only if they are followed. This is partially counter-intuitive to the mind of man. We tend to do something only after we have investigated it, and understood at least a little about it. At first, one must struggle to deny oneself pleasurable things, such as indulgence of the flesh, luxury and ease, but as one grows in the Christian life, he sees that the things which

previously were difficult to deny to himself change in their appearance, and he sees them as they really are.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

A life of indulgence, luxury and ease does not bring happiness, and never has and never will. It only wastes time, and dulls the senses of the soul, and we are left with a vague feeling of unhappiness and unfulfillment. The things we are called to deny ourselves of are all injurious to us. We are able to see this only with experience. Most people never know why they feel this way. A very few, such as the prodigal son, come to their senses and see why their soul is in such a state. A better way to learn the benefit of denying ourselves is to live with effort and desire.

A similar reading from St Mark is used on the 3rd Sunday of Great Lent (Mark 8:34-9:1). See <http://www.orthodox.net/sermons> under the Heading "Third Sunday of Great Lent" for homilies on this topic.

Luke 9:27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

This is a reference to our Lord's transfiguration, which followed some few days after He spoke these words.

Bibliography

St John Chrysostom, Homily VI, on Colossians ii. 6, 7,
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf113.iv.iv.vi.html>

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

Priest Seraphim Oct 29/Nov 11 2008.

[St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas](http://www.orthodox.net/scripture/22nd-week-after-pentecost_tuesday_colossians:22-33+luke9:23-27.rtf)

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