

Reflection on the Gospel Reading for the 6th Sunday of Luke (Luke 8:26-39)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvo_00S864A

Epistle Reading for today covered on the Sunday After the Feast of the Cross

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umCZ_eWpE4Q

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 2:16-20

Brethren, knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- ***But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor.***

The problem in Galatia

- The opponents would say that NOT following the Law makes one a transgressor
- Paul is saying, by contrast, that returning to something that God has transcended is what would make the Galatians transgressors. He turns the table on the opponents, who, he says, are not attuned to God's will.
- We must make progress, meaning that we do not look back.
 - Luke 9:61-62: "Still another said, 'I will follow you, Lord. But allow me first to say good-bye to those in my family.'" Jesus said to him, "No one who has once grasped the plow yet keeps looking backward is fit for the kingdom of God."
 - Luke Johnson: The image of the plow recalls Elisha who was called while plowing, and begged leave to "kiss my father and mother and then I will follow you" (1 Kgs 19:19-21). Elijah allowed him; Jesus' demand is stricter.
- We must make progress, meaning that we advance in the spiritual life.

- 1 Cor 3: “But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?”
- When we follow Christ, we become different. We are born from above, and must live accordingly.
- **Psalm 44:10-11 (LXX):** “Hear, O daughter, and see and incline your ear and forget your people and your father’s house and the king will desire your beauty.”
- **St. Athanasios the Great, Letter to Markellinos, 6:** Therefore, since he knew He would be born of a Virgin, he was by no means silent about it, but immediately gave an indication of this matter in the forty-fourth [Psalm]: “Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people and your father’s house, and the King will desire your beauty, for He is your Lord.” For this is surely similar to this saying of Gabriel: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.”
- **St. Basil the Great, *Homilies on the Psalms* 17.9:** ‘*Incline thy ear*’ to this teaching in order that you may forget those depraved customs and the lessons of your fathers. Therefore, ‘*forget thy people and thy father’s house.*’ For, everyone who commits sin is of the devil. Cast out, I pray you, he says, the teachings of the evil spirits, forget sacrifices, nocturnal dances, tales which inflame to fornication and to every form of licentiousness... that you may hate the parent who previously begot you for destruction. If through such forgetfulness you erase the blemishes of your depraved learning, assuming your own proper beauty, you will appear desirable to your Spouse and King. (transl. from A.C. Way, *St. Basil Exegetic Homilies*, FC 46.291)
- Perfection in the Sermon on the Mount. But it’s important to stress that we do not accomplish this immediately.
 - Matthew 5:48: “Be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect.”
 - St. John Climacos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*
 - **Cyprian, *Confessions*, 2.17:** For I remember that I had so often resisted the desire for food, that having abstained from taking any for two or three days, my mind was not troubled even by the recollection of any eatables and also that sleep was by the assaults of the devil so far removed from my eyes, that for several days and nights I used to pray the Lord to grant a little sleep to my eyes; and then I felt that I was in greater peril from the want of food and sleep than from struggling against sloth and gluttony. And so as we ought to be careful not to fall into dangerous effeminacy through desire for bodily gratification, nor indulge ourselves with eating before the right time nor take too much, so also we ought to refresh ourselves with food and sleep at the proper time even if we dislike it. For the struggle in each case is caused by the devices of the enemy; and excessive abstinence is still more injurious to us than careless satiety: for from this latter the

intervention of a healthy compunction will raise us to the right measure of strictness, and not from the former.