

Weekly Gospel Readings The 1st Sunday of the Holy Lent

The Lent's Journey

On this Sunday, the first Sunday of the Holy Lent, we read [Matthew 6:19-33](#). In this passage, the Lord warns us about working for earthly profit that may decay. Rather we should seek the heavenly treasures, that will last forever ([Matt 6:19-20](#)). He continued to remind us that “No one can serve two masters” ([Matt 6:24](#)). At the end of the passage Jesus advises us not to worry about our lives “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” ([Matt 6:33](#))

But before we dive into these verses, let us reflect on the Holy Lent's entity, or as it was called in the early days of Christianity “The Pre Paschal-Fast.” Fr. Alexander Schmemmann in his book “Great Lent” refers to the fast as a “Journey to Pascha,” and oftentimes the fast was likened by the Church Fathers as a spiritual journey of the soul through the wilderness of the world to her final resting place in the Heaven. Hence, it is an expedition leading us to the freedom from sins and joining the Lord in His death and into Resurrection, like the Israelites exodus from Egypt's slavery.

Documenting this understanding, when our Church Fathers organized the Lent's readings, they included on Monday of the first week the reading from Exodus “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” ([Ex 2:24](#)), to alert us that to reach our destination with the Lord in His resurrection, we need to cry out to Him as the Psalmist said “Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!” ([Psalm 31:2](#)), and remind the Lord of His covenant with us.

Then, it is very appropriate to start our own journey in the first Sunday of the fast with the reading from [Matthew 6:19-33](#), where Jesus challenges us to examine our priorities. It is easy to get caught up in accumulating earthly treasures, but by prioritizing heavenly treasures, we align our hearts with God's purposes. Jesus then presents a stark truth: we cannot serve both God and material wealth. If we prioritize wealth and possessions, they become our master. Conversely, if we prioritize God, our love and devotion to Him will naturally outweigh any attachment to material things trusting Him to provide for our needs.

Let us start this holy period of the fast remaining steadfast in our prayers, fasting, and almsgiving, guarding our hearts against worldly desires, choosing to serve God wholeheartedly, and trusting in His provision rather than succumbing to worry and anxiety. It is a call to live with an eternal perspective, seeking first the kingdom of God and trusting Him to meet all our needs.

Amen.

Resources

Coptic Church Review. Volume 31, Number 1, 2010

Liturgical Readings of the Coptic Church (Arabic), Fouad Naguib Youssef, 2010

Fr. Alexander Shmemann, Great Lent, Journey to Pascha (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001)

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