

We all receive God's blessings equally. But some of us, receiving God's fire, that is, His word, become soft like beeswax, while the others like clay become hard as stone. And if we do not want Him, He does not force any of us, but like the sun He sends His rays and illuminates the whole world, and he who wants to see Him, sees Him, whereas the one who does not want to see Him, is not forced by Him. And no one is responsible for this privation of light except the one who does not want to have it.

God created the sun and the eye. Man is free to receive the sun's light or not. The same is true here. God sends the light of knowledge like rays to all, but He also gave us faith like an eye. The one who wants to receive knowledge through faith, keeps it by his works, and so God gives him more willingness, knowledge, and power.

Saint Peter of Damascus



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

24 February 2013

**Sunday 24 February 2013 is the
Sunday of the Publican and the
Pharisee**

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

Apolytikion:

Let us flee the proud speech of the Pharisee; and let us learn the humility of the Publican, as with groans we cry to the Saviour: 'Be merciful to us, for you alone are ready to forgive!'

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2:1-9; Mark 13:9-13
Tarasius, Pat. Of Constantinople; Martyrs Reginus and Lebeadeus

Tuesday: 2 Peter 2:9-22; Mark 13:14-23
Porphyrius, Bp. of Gaza; Photine, the Samaritan Women

Wednesday: 2 Peter 3:1-18; Mark 13:24-31
Procopius the Confessor; Gelasius

Thursday: 1John 1:8-10; 2:1-6; Mark 13:31-37; 14:1-2
Righteous John Cassian; Basil the Confessor

Friday: 1 John 2:7-17; Mark 14:3-9
Martyr Eudocia; Andonina the New Martyr

Saturday: 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 20:46-47; 21:1-4
Martyr Hesychius; Nicholas Planas

The Publican and the Pharisee

Today marks the beginning of Triodion as we move into the period of preparation for Great Lent. And today's Gospel challenges us to consider our real position before God, and the sort of repentance that God is asking of us in the coming season.

In this parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, Jesus Christ presents us with two very different responses to God. The Pharisee considered himself a righteous man. He thanks God for this and points out that he is not like other sinners, and especially not like the Publican (or tax-collector) in whose presence he was praying. The Publican, by contrast, did not even dare to lift his eyes to heaven, but could only repeat: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And Jesus says of him: "This man, I tell you, went home justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up."

The Pharisee was in many respects a righteous man and he is to be commended in giving God the credit for his good actions. The things that he does are good. But in his self-certainty he is blind to his own sins and his own need to repent and instead sees himself as having somehow "arrived." Moreover, in comparing himself to others we see his pride. He lacks the humility of the Publican who was perfectly aware of his own sin, not looking at anyone else, but throwing himself entirely onto the mercy of God.

We can be very quick to judge people whom we see as Pharisees, yet we all have something of the Pharisee in us. We would prefer to focus on our own strong points and point out the failings of others. And yet Christ shows us that it is only by entering into our own hearts and acknowledging who we truly are before God that we are able to throw ourselves onto His mercy and receive His forgiveness.

Let us not pray as the Pharisee: for he who exalts himself shall be humbled. Let us humble ourselves before God and with fasting cry aloud as the Publican: God be merciful to us sinners.

From Vespers for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee



