

St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church
Homily on the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost
Romans 5: 1-10; St. Matthew 6: 22-33

Romans 5: 1-10. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.** For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Matthew 6:22-33. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

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Summary of Today's Readings: St. Paul; "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1: 25).

There is much anxiety in the world today. Gas prices have gone up, stressing already tight budgets. The locomotive growth of India and China, with the resultant demand for oil suggests that this trend will continue. Money problems in turn put stress on the family, an institution that has suffered from decades of assault – and is now showing serious signs of weakness. The normalization of pre-marital sex, divorce and illegitimacy is a logical – if misguided – attempt by society to find a new equilibrium. Nor is the problem confined to the family – our churches have also suffered from decades of external assault and internal neglect. So it happens that the very institutions that were designed to support people in their attempt to pursue fulfillment and joy have become completely irrelevant for most people, and for some have even become a source of stress themselves. For many, the very idea that fulfillment and joy are worthy goals is itself foolish: for a variety of psychological/cultural reasons, Americans have largely settled for more attainable dreams. This is tragedy, and the devil must be smiling.

Why should gas prices have anything to do with happiness? Since when is it acceptable to stop dreaming of a perfect life? Since when is it acceptable to give in to an enemy bent on our destruction? Where is the restless spirit of your ancestors, the Ukrainians who, in the face of oppression and against overwhelming odds, carved a new way of life as Cossacks "below the rapids", as "Orthodox Brotherhoods" in the cities and towns, and as hard-working immigrants here in a New World? Where is the restless spirit of your ancestors, the Americans who founded this country to be a place that enabled all to pursue "life, liberty, and an happiness" and who have endured countless sacrifices to protect and extend these rights not just here but throughout the world? Do we really believe that life is harder now than then? Or is it that we are less? If so, it is not due to intelligence, learning, or physical constitution – for in all these measures, our generations are much greater than those that came before. We are less than those before us because we have not centered our hope on Christ, a "hope that [as St. Paul says in today's reading] does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given us". We are less than our times demand because we are less than Christian; the Christian "glories in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." [this, again, from today's reading]

Christ Himself tells us today of our "little faith", pointing out that God knows what we need, and promising this; that if we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." I am not saying that faith in God, His power, and His love for you will bring down the price of gas or bring high paying jobs to the Blackstone Valley. But it will restore your family and make it the source of support and sanctification it was designed to be. It will not lower the cost of much-needed maintenance to our beloved temple, but it will make your parish home the source of support and sanctification it was designed to be. It may not lead you into the consumer's paradise the world has taught to desire, but it will lead you to an eternal life of blessedness that is the heart's truest desire. The wisdom of God seems like folly because the world itself is foolish. Who is foolish, the God-Man who died on the cross to make your resurrection into perfection possible, or those who reject this gift in favor of the cares and shallow satisfactions of the world? God knows you better than the wisest father knows his children. **Trust in Him. He has a plan for you, and its glory puts high grass prices and leaky roofs into the context they deserve.**