

Great Monday

In the Divine service for this day the Holy Church invites the faithful to walk with Christ, to be crucified with Him, to die to the pleasures of this life for His sake in order to live with Him. Through mystical contemplation drawing together the events of the Old and New Testaments, she shows us the future innocent suffering of the Savior in the Old Testament prototype of the chaste Joseph, whom the envy of the brothers innocently sold and humiliated, but later was restored by God. "Joseph," it says in the Synaxarion, "is the prototype of Christ, because Christ also becomes an object of envy for persons of the same race, the Jews, and is sold by the disciple for thirty silver coins, is confined in a gloomy and narrow pit, a tomb, and, having risen from it by His own power, reigning over Egypt, i.e. above any sin, and in the end conquers it, rules over all the world, will through His love for man deliver us by the bestowal of the mysterious wheat and to eat the heavenly bread, His own Life-bearing Flesh." From the events of the Gospel the Holy Church recalls the drying up of the barren fig tree. According to the mind of the Holy Church, the barren fig tree represents a Jewish assembly, in which Jesus Christ did not find true fruit but only the hypocritical shadow of the law which convicted and condemned it. But this fig tree as well represents any soul which does not yield the fruit of repentance, and is why the Holy Church also calls to us: "The fig tree was withered up because it was unfruitful. We should fear the same punishment, O brethren, and bring worthy fruit of repentance to Christ, who grants us great mercy". Besides the narration about the drying up of a fig tree, the Matins Gospel will edify us this day with a parable told by the Savior about the unrighteous vinedressers who first killed the servants of their lord who were sent for the grapes, but later even the son of the lord. In this parable, representing the nearest paradigm of the hardness of the Jews, who before slew the prophets, and with coming to earth of the Son the God crucified even Him, it is impossible not to also see the terrible condemnation for Christians boldly breaking the commandments of the Apostles and the Holy Fathers, and in this way continuing to crucify the Son of God through their sins (Refer to the note on page 544). In the Gospel reading in the liturgy the Holy Church recalls the fate of the apostate Judaic people even to end of the world, as they were described before by Jesus Christ. The faithful are motivated by the description of great and various afflictions and signs of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age amidst evil through magnanimity, impartiality, patience, spiritual prayer and vigil and are comforted in the promise of the Savior about the spread of the gospel throughout the world but "for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Mt. 24: 14, 22).

Troparion, tone 8

**Behold the Bridegroom comes at midnight,
And blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching;
And again, unworthy is the servant whom He shall find heedless.
Beware, therefore, O my soul, do not be burdened with sleep,**

**Lest you be given over to death,
And lest you be shut out of the Kingdom.
But return to your senses and cry aloud:
Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O our God,
Through the Theotokos, have mercy on us.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**Jacob lamented the loss of Joseph,
And his noble son was seated on a chariot, and honored as a king.
For when he refused to be enslaved by the pleasures of the Egyptian woman,
He was glorified by the One, who knows the hearts of men,
And bestows on them an incorruptible crown.**

Exapostilarion

**Thy chamber I see adorned, O my Savior,
And I have no garment that I may enter therein.
Enlighten the vesture of my soul,
O Giver of Light, and save me.**

Matins Gospel: Mt. 21:18-43; sel. 84. **Paramoeas:** 1) Ezek. 1:1-20. 2) Exod. 1:1-20. 3) Job 1:1-12. **Gospel:** Mt. 24:3-35; sel. 98-101.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 534-5
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