

## JUDGMENT SUNDAY TEACHES US THAT GOD IS A JUST JUDGE

On the third Sunday of the Triodion, our Church sets before us the fearsome Second Coming of the Lord. During the previous two Sundays, the parables of "the Publican and the Pharisee" and especially "the Prodigal Son" were used to emphasize God's infinite compassion and goodness. However, realizing that this could possibly prompt people to incorrectly and falsely hope in God's forgivingness alone, while foolishly ignoring His commandments, living with indifference, persisting in sin, and squandering the time that has been given to them to acquire salvation, the holy Fathers appointed that we commemorate and bring to mind the Second Coming of Christ on this day in order to underline and remind us that God is not only a compassionate Lord, but also a righteous Judge Who renders to each man according to his works.

Behold how St. Gregory Palamas affirms the above: "Last Sunday through the parable of the prodigal who was saved, the Church commemorated God's incomparable love for mankind. This Sunday it teaches us about His terrifying Judgment to come, following the right order and in accordance with the prophetic sayings: **"I will sing of mercy and of judgment" (Ps. 101:1)**, and, **"God hath spoken once: twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his works" (Ps. 62:11-12)**.

"Mercy and forbearance precede the divine Judgment. God Himself is the first possessor of every virtue and embraces them all. He is both just and merciful. But as mercy does not go with judgment, as it is written, **"Thou shalt not be merciful to a poor man at judgment" (cf. Prov. 24:23)**, God rightly allotted a proper time to each, appointing the present for forbearance, the future for retribution. The grace of the Spirit so ordered the rites of the Holy Church, that when we learn that we receive forgiveness of sins from what happens here and now, we may press on while still in this present life to attain everlasting mercy and make ourselves worthy of the divine love for mankind. For that Judgment is without mercy for the unmerciful."

Thus, through the recollection of that frightful day, the holy Fathers desire to wake us up from the sleep of indolence, motivate us to live virtuously, and encourage us to show love and compassion toward our fellow man.

A certain hymn (specifically, the *kontakion*) chanted on this Sunday says:

When You come, O God, to the earth in glory, the entire universe will tremble [with fear]. A river of fire will flow forth from Thy judgment seat. Books will be opened, and the secret [deeds of men] will be publicized. At that time, deliver me from the inextinguishable [eternal] fire, and deem me worthy of standing on Your right, **O most-righteous Judge.**