

**Third Week of Lent**  
**Sunday, February 28, 2016**

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.  
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—  
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,  
or decide by what he hears with his ears;  
Isaiah 11:1-3*

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If you turn from all other activity and give yourself entirely to the cultivation of the virtues of soul and body, which is what the fathers mean by religious devotion; and if you disregard any dream or private thought not confirmed by Scripture, and avoid all pointless company, not hearing or reading anything fruitless, and especially anything that involves heresy, then the tears of joy and understanding will well up copiously within you and you will drink from their plentitude. In this way you will attain another form of prayer, the form of pure prayer that is proper to the contemplative. For just as previously you had one form of reading, one form of tears and prayer, so now you have another. Since your intellect has moved into the sphere of spiritual contemplation, you should now read all parts of the Scriptures, no longer fearing the more difficult and obscure passages, as is the case with those still at the stage of ascetic practice, who are weak in their ignorance.

Saint Peter of Damascus (c.12<sup>th</sup> Century)  
*The Philokalia*

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Peter of Damascus believes that the “fear of the Lord” is the best place to start our spiritual formation. He believes that “God guards, nourishes and provides for us, giving us life and saving us from our enemies.” As we fear the Lord we receive grace upon grace which helps us to humble ourselves in our walk with Christ. It is in this humility that God is able to teach us, guide us and change us.

In this section of *The Philokalia* Peter walks through the Beatitudes as levels of practice and contemplation. He wants us “to gain possession of God within ourselves” and live by the virtues of Christ.

**The Beatitudes**

He said:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.