

Small Groups Curriculum

Week of March 7, 2021

OPENING PRAYER

Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospels. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having trampled down all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the illumination of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Before the Reading of the Gospel
Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

For Judgment Sunday

SUNDAY EPISTLE

St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2

SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Gospel According to Matthew 25:31-46

All readings are available at goarch.org or the Daily Readings app.

EPISTLE READING

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

GOSPEL READING

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left.

Then the King will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

Then He will say to those at His left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Discussion

INTRO NOTES

1. We Are All Connected

- A. In the Epistle, Saint Paul describes the ways our actions can negatively affect others
 - i. “Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall”
- B. In the Gospel, Jesus frames the basic question of salvation in terms of what we did (or didn't do) for others
 - i. “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink...”
- C. Salvation is not a thing we seek alone, and the spiritual life is not something we pursue without regard for others

2. Opportunities for Healing

- A. Saint Paul warns us that our choices may “become a stumbling block to the weak”
 - i. “So by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died”
- B. This is the same concern Jesus shows us in the Gospel, where we are called to address the needs of others by feeding and clothing people
- C. When we show concern for others, we transform their needs into opportunities for healing rather than destruction

3. Seeing Christ in Others

- A. Saint Paul observes that, when we sin against others, we are sinning against the Lord
 - i. “Sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ”
- B. Similarly Jesus tells us that, when we serve others, we serve the Lord
 - i. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”
- C. We must learn to see Christ in others

For more on this Sunday's Gospel reading, watch:
[Live the Word #21 | My Brother is My Life](#)

Discussion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. How would life be different if we all understood that we're in this together? That the spiritual life isn't about isolation but about communion?
3. Do you see a need in someone you know? How can you turn this need into an opportunity for grace and healing, both for others and yourself?
4. How can you help develop a heart that can find Christ in others, even when you can't see Him?

If you don't get through all the questions, that's ok!

Discussion

WRAP-UP NOTES

Each Wrap-Up should be personal and based on your time together as a Small Group. These three questions can help you, as a Small Group Leader, wrap up your weekly meeting:

1. What are you grateful to have learned or heard in the conversation?
2. What simple statement or question from the conversation can you share again that would be most helpful to hear again three years from now?
3. If you could share up to twelve words on the topic of “connection” what would you say?

AT THE END OF MEETINGS

We give thanks to You, invisible King, Who by Your boundless power fashioned the universe, and in the multitude of Your mercy brought all things from nothing into being. Look down from heaven, O Master, upon those who have bowed their heads before You; for they have not bowed before flesh and blood, but before You, the awesome God. Therefore, O Master, make smooth and beneficial for us all, whatever lies ahead, according to the need of each: Sail with those who sail; travel with those who travel; heal the sick, Physician of our souls and bodies. Through the grace, compassion, and love for mankind of Your only-begotten Son, with whom You are blessed, together with Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Following the Lord's Prayer
Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom