

Small Groups Curriculum

Week of March 21, 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 Sunday of Orthodoxy

SUNDAY EPISTLE

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40

SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Gospel According to John 1:43-51

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

EPISTLE READING

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign enemies to flight.

Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated -- of whom the world was not worthy -- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

GOSPEL READING

At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and he said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Discussion

INTRO NOTES

1. God's Promise

- A. In the Epistle, Saint Paul lists generations of prophets and martyrs who patiently waited for God's promise
 - i. "All these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised..."
- B. In the Gospel, Nathanael recognizes that Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise
 - i. "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"
- C. We have looked upon the face of God and lived

2. We See God, God Sees Us

- A. Saint Paul says that even the great wonders the prophets experienced do not compare to the wonder of the Incarnation of Christ
 - i. "God had foreseen something better for us..."
- B. Yet it's not simply that we can look upon the face of God; the Lord, in His love, also looks upon us
 - i. "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you"
- C. This is the warmth and connection of the Kingdom of God, where the Lord looks upon us with His loving kindness

3. Surprised by God

- A. Saint Paul lists "regular" people who God called to incredible acts of heroism that the world does not understand
 - i. "They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated -- of whom the world was not worthy..."
- B. Similarly, at first Nathanael didn't think that Jesus of Nazareth could actually be the Son of God
 - i. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"
- C. The Lord acts in ways we may not expect, and exceeds even our biggest ideas and expectations about Him

For more on this Sunday's Gospel reading, watch:

[Live the Word #23 | The Triumph of Orthodoxy](#)

Discussion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. Does the long list of amazing things the saints have done (in the Epistle reading) make you feel inadequate, like you'll never reach such heights of holiness? Or does God's promise of salvation give you hope that it's possible for you too? Or is it a bit of both?
3. What would it mean to see God in your regular, everyday life? What would it mean to be seen by Him? How is He calling you to "follow Him" today within the context of your own real and lived experiences?
4. How has God caught you off your guard? How has He surprised you?

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 “being seen by God” 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