

Small Groups Curriculum

Week of March 28, 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 Saint Gregory Palamas

SUNDAY EPISTLE

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3

SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Gospel According to Mark 2:1-12

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

EPISTLE READING

"In the beginning, Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end."

But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard Him.

GOSPEL READING

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men.

And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- He said to the paralytic -- "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home."

And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Discussion

INTRO NOTES

1. Carried to Christ

- A. In the Gospel, we see four people carry their friend (who was powerless to reach Christ on his own)
 - i. “They came, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men...”
- B. In the Epistle, Saint Paul also observes that the preaching and teaching of others helps bring us to the Lord
 - i. “We must pay closer attention to what we have heard..”
- C. We are carried to Christ more often (and in more ways) than we may think

2. The Obstacles We Face

- A. Saint Paul observes that our path to salvation contains obstacles that can get us off track
 - i. “We must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it...”
- B. The paralyzed man faced more obstacles than his disability, yet his friends continued to move mountains for him
 - i. “When they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him...”
- C. The strength of others can compensate for our weakness and help us overcome obstacles we otherwise couldn't

3. Knowable and Unknowable

- A. Saint Paul notes that the man Jesus of Nazareth is also the God who created all things
 - i. “Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands...”
- B. Similarly, Jesus gives the people a physical sign so they can see what is invisible
 - i. “That you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home”
- C. The invisible and unknowable God has revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ; what a mystery

For more on this Sunday's Gospel reading, watch:
[Live the Word #24 | How We See the Invisible](#)

Discussion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. When you can't bring yourself to Jesus, who are the people that carry you?
3. Just as the paralytic faced many obstacles (his paralysis, a crowd of people, etc), what are the obstacles getting between you and Jesus?
4. Just as the Scribes and Pharisees had a certain expectation of how God would act, do you ever feel that you expect God to act a certain way? Are you then surprised by what you didn't know about Him? As you sit in this tension between God's knowability and unknowability, what happens in your heart?

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 “surprise” 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