

Small Groups Curriculum

Week of October 11, 2020

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

THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

For the Sunday of the 7th Ecumenical Council

SUNDAY EPISTLE

St. Paul's Letter to Titus 3:8-15

SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Gospel According to Luke 8:5-15

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

EPISTLE READING

Titus, my son, the saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men.

But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned.

When I send Artemas or Tychicos to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful.

All who are with me send greeting to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

GOSPEL READING

The Lord said this parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold."

And when His disciples asked Him what this parable meant, He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience."

As He said these things, He cried out "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Discussion

INTRO NOTES

1. What it means to be fruitful
 - A. Jesus tells us a parable about seed taking root and then bearing fruit
 - B. Within every fruit is another seed which can take root in more soil
 - C. “Being fruitful” is not just about receiving the Word of God, but planting it in others

2. Avoiding hardness of heart
 - A. St. Paul offers practical advice to “avoid stupid controversies” and other “unprofitable and futile” things
 - B. He says we should focus instead on “applying ourselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful”

3. Make your heart good soil
 - A. When our hearts are hardened, they become like hard and dry soil
 - B. The Word of God can’t take root in a heart like this
 - C. Our good deeds help open our hearts to the Word of God

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

[Live the Word #2 | Is Your Heart Open to God?](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. Have you ever become so concerned with being right that it has stood in the way of loving someone?
3. What is preventing your heart from being entirely good soil? Where is your heart hard and resistant to receiving God’s word?
4. What can you do today to start tilling the ground of 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 “hardness of heart” 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