

Small Groups Curriculum

Week of February 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 the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

SUNDAY EPISTLE

St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 6:12-20

SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Gospel According to Luke 15:11-32

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

EPISTLE READING

Brethren, "all things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" -- and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one flesh." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him.

Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body and in your spirit which belong to God.

GOSPEL READING

The Lord said this parable: "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.

"And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his belly with the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father.

“But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'”

Discussion

INTRO NOTES

1. Who (and Whose) We Are

- A. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us about a son who forgot himself and fell into sin
- B. When he came back to himself, he decided to approach his father as a servant but was welcomed as a son
- C. In the Epistle, St. Paul reminds us that “you are not your own; you were bought with a price”
- D. We are the Lord’s, not merely as servants, but as sons and daughters; because “he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him”

2. Joining (and Enslaving) Ourselves to Sin

- A. St. Paul warns us against, immoral action, saying “he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her”
- B. The risk is becoming powerless in the face of these temptations; unlike St. Paul, who tells us “I will not be enslaved by anything”
- C. The Prodigal Son left his father’s home and joined himself with sin and sinful people
- D. This reduced him to a pitiful, even animalistic existence where he was left starving and alone; a slave to sin he no longer desired
- E. He finally “came to himself” and decided to return to his father’s house and be joined to life, not the sin and death that consumed him

3. The Challenge of Mercy

- A. When the Prodigal Son returned home, his older brother refused to welcome him
- B. He saw the mercy which the father offered the Prodigal Son as an insult: “lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends”
- C. St. Paul, who is writing to the Corinthians to set aside their wicked ways, does not approach them with the judgment which the older brother displayed
- D. He wants them to repent and be joined to the Lord, not to be locked out

For more on this Sunday’s Gospel reading, watch:
[Live the Word #20 I Remember Who You Are](#)

Discussion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. How have you forgotten who (and Whose) you are? What bad habits or negative thought patterns reinforce this confusion?
3. Joining ourselves to sinful and unhealthy things leads to destruction. Anything that is separated from God, in fact, does this, even things we may think are “good.” Even helping others can even become a source of pride. What unhealthy habits consume you? How can you come to see yourself primarily as “God’s beloved child,” rather than anything else? How can this bring you back into the Father’s House?
4. It’s easy to resent others for their mistakes, especially if we feel like we’re doing what’s right. Have you ever found yourself in the position of the older brother? Did your words and actions help bring someone closer to Christ, or push them (and even yourself) further away?

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 “slavery” 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