

Small Groups Curriculum

Week of June 13, 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 Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

SUNDAY EPISTLE

Acts of the Apostles 20:16-18, 28-36

SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Gospel According to John 17:1-13

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

EPISTLE READING

In those days, Paul had decided to sail past Ephesos, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. And from Miletos he sent to Ephesos and called to him the elders of the church.

And when they came to him, he said to them: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

GOSPEL READING

At that time, Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do; and now, Father, you glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made.

“I have manifested your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world; yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you; for I have given them the words which you gave me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you did send me.

“I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are mine; all mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

“While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”

Discussion

INTRO NOTES

1. Who Christ Is

- A. In the Gospel, Jesus stress His divinity and unity with God the Father
 - i. “That they may be one, even as we are one”
 - ii. We read this Gospel on the Sunday dedicated to the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, which gathered in response to the heresy of Arianism
 - 1. This taught that Christ is a mere creation, not “true God of true God” as we say in the Creed
- B. In the Book of Acts, Paul is on his way to Jerusalem to celebrate a great feast of the Church
 - i. “He was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost”
- C. Christians have always confessed Christ as the divine Son of God, not merely a prophet

2. Victory in Christ

- A. In the Gospel, Jesus is offering comfort before He ascends the Cross
 - i. He’s reminding His disciples that the man they will see hanging from a Cross is the very Son of God, sent by the Father Himself
 - ii. “Father, you glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made”
- B. In the Book of Acts, Saint Paul is honest about future troubles
 - i. “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock...”
 - ii. Yet, just as the Cross did not defeat Christ, these difficulties will not overcome the Church in Christ
 - 1. “I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified”
- C. Christ reveals the Light to us, no matter how oppressive and total the darkness

3. Absence and Connection

- A. In the Gospel, Jesus lifts up His disciples in prayer to His Father
 - i. “I am praying for them”
 - ii. Even though Jesus is preparing for His Ascension, He will not “leave” the Church

Discussion

- iii. The pain of our separation from Christ is overcome by the truth that He is no mere man, no mere creation
 - 1. Jesus Christ is true God of true God
 - 2. And He is always with us
- B. In the Book of Acts, Saint Paul wants to see some of his fellow Christians one last time
 - i. “Now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more” (Acts 20:25)
 - ii. Yet Paul will forever remain united to them in Christ
 - 1. “And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all”
- C. Though divided by time and space, we remain united in Christ

For more on this Sunday’s Scripture readings, watch:
[Live the Word #35 I With Christ and His Saints](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. When you reflect on the fact that Christ is no mere prophet, but rather the Son of God, how do you respond? How does knowing that the Son of God took on flesh affect you?
3. Are you struggling with something that feels like defeat? Are you struggling under the attack of fierce wolves? How can you bring this to your brothers and sisters in Christ?
4. How do you experience connection in Christ? Are you close to any saints that preceded you? To any people that may be a world away from you? As you reflect on Jesus’s prayer for the world’s oneness, how do you see yourself fitting into bringing Christ’s prayer to fruition in your life?

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