

THE WORD OF GOD: Choosing Discipleship

Lesson 11. Expulsion from Paradise

Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Reading of the day: Matthew 5:17-48

Prepare Ahead: The background section is material for the instructor and is not meant to be used word for word. The answers to the Bible Study discussion questions are provided for informational purposes and can be read aloud and shared verbally.

References:

www.vemkar.us

Orthodox Study Bible

Memory Verse:

“Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away.”

- Matthew 5:42

Bible Study Lesson

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

For Students

Sunday of the Expulsion from Paradise (Matthew 5:17-48)

¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one iota or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. ²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

³¹ “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

³³ “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. ⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Questions:

1. *Christ says, “I have come to fulfill the Law” (verse 17). What does it mean to fulfill something? What does it mean when Christ says it concerning the Law?*
2. *What does it mean when Christ says, “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way” (v. 23-24)? Why is this important and how do we practice this?*
3. *Plucking your eye out (v. 29) and cutting your hand off (v. 30) sound very extreme so that you do not sin. Does Christ really want us to do this? What is He trying to explain?*
4. *Why does Christ say not to resist evil (v. 39)? Does this mean we should let evil happen to us without doing anything about it?*
5. *Has there ever been a time when you, instead of hating or hurting someone who hurt you, forgave them and loved them? How did that make you feel?*
6. *Christ concludes the Gospel reading with “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (v. 48). How do you can you be perfect like your heavenly Father?*

For the Teacher

Background:

The second Sunday of the period of Great Lent is called the Sunday of Expulsion. The basis of the mystery of and the name of the day can be found in the Holy Bible, in the Book of Genesis: "So the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden and made him cultivate the soil from which he had been formed" (3:23). Mankind, listening to the deceitful words of Satan, disobeyed the divine commandments and ate the forbidden fruit, welcoming sin and death into the world. Naturally Adam and Eve did not immediately die, but were deprived of the eternity granted by God. For this reason, man must work hard and sweat to make the soil produce enough food, and woman will have pain in giving birth to her offspring. And in end, God said to them: "You were made from soil and you will become soil again" (Genesis 3:19).

The Church Fathers have given the Sundays of the Period of great lent such names and mysteries which symbolize mankind's way of life – birth, sinning, regret and repentance. This should serve for men as an occasion for reflecting on one's life in order that Great Lent serve as a period of fruitfulness and spiritual productivity.

Questions:

- 1. Christ says, "I have come to fulfill the Law" (verse 17). What does it mean to fulfill something? What does it mean when Christ says it concerning the Law?**

To fulfill something means to make it complete. We say this when someone fulfills an obligation or responsibility. Jesus does the same thing when He speaks about fulfilling the Law.

Jesus begins His discourse with the assurance that He has not come to abandon the earlier revelation of the commands and prohibitions of Yahweh's Law until "all things have taken place" and the Law has been "fulfilled" (verses 17-18). By referring to "the Law and the prophets" Jesus' reference is to the entire content of Sacred Scripture from first of the book of Moses (Genesis) to the last book of the prophets (Malachi). He is the one of whom the Law and the prophets spoke and He is the one who will do what the Law was not able to do – namely save mankind from Satan's destruction.

- 2. What does it mean when Christ says, "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way" (v. 23-24)? Why is this important and how do we practice this?**

Peace with other believers is a requirement for worship. You cannot worship God and be in communion with God if you hold a grudge against someone. Before we go to church and worship Christ, we must reconcile with anyone we have a problem with. This is why we participate in the "Kiss of Peace" at the beginning of the eucharistic prayer (page 27 in the Divine Liturgy books). Before we commune with Christ through Holy Communion, we first reconcile with those in the church.

St. James write this in his epistle where he says, "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (4:20). The Kiss of Peace and making amends with our brothers and sisters is a sign of reconciliation and forgiveness, preparing us faithful to offer our holy gifts at the altar.

3. Plucking your eye out (v. 29) and cutting your hand off (v. 30) sound very extreme so that you do not sin. Does Christ really want us to do this? What is He trying to explain?

No. This imagery is not to be taken literally but refers to decisive action to avoid sin and to continue purity. Jesus does not want us plucking out eyes and cutting off hands, but He does want us to realize the severity of the situation and how awful sin is. Many think sin is just doing something wrong and that it is not a big deal. Sin, in reality, is participating in the evil forces of this world and affirming our allegiance to the demons and Satan's kingdom. Every time we sin, we declare our loyalty to Satan. This is why Christ says it is better to lose one piece of us than our entire body be cast into hell. As Christians, we must strive not to commit sin and if we do, because of our weak nature, we rush to ask forgiveness.

4. Why does Christ say not to resist evil (v. 39)? Does this mean we should let evil happen to us without doing anything about it?

Jesus warns us not to resist violence with more violence. It is usually our first reaction to answer a sin against us with another sin. If someone hurts us, we must hurt them. We think that by repaying someone with the same pain (or more) that we received we will get even, and everything will end nicely. That is not what happens. When we answer evil with evil, we escalate the situation and expand Satan's kingdom in this world. Evil can only be overcome by good, which keeps us free from compromise with the devil and can bring our enemy under the yoke of God's love.

5. Has there ever been a time when you, instead of hating or hurting someone who hurt you, forgave them and loved them? How did that make you feel?

Answers will vary. One example comes from the lives of the saints. A saint of the desert once found his hut being looted of its few possessions, and he knelt in the corner praying for the thieves. When they left, the monk realized they had not taken his walking stick. This monk pursued them for many days until he was able to give them the stick as well. Seeing his humility, the thieves returned everything to him and were converted to Jesus Christ.

6. Christ concludes the Gospel reading with *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (v. 48). How do you can be perfect like your heavenly Father?

The new commandment of Christian life is *"to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Mt 5.48). It is to love as Christ Himself has loved. *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you"* (Jn 15.12). People cannot live the Christian life of divine love in imitation of God's perfection without the grace of the Holy Spirit, for, with the power of God, what is impossible to men becomes possible. *"For with God all things are possible"* (Mk 10.27).

Being perfect means following God's will. This includes, but is not limited to, loving, helping, ministering, and forgiving others. The perfect Christian life is ultimately one which demonstrates God's glory in thought, word and deed. There are many ways to do this. Allow the students to give their ideas too.

Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

At Home

Please complete the assignment by next class.

Memory Verse:

“Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away.” - Matthew 5:42