



Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

Study Guide - Level 2 (Grades 3–5 / Ages 8–10)

Today is the Second Sunday of the Great Fast

Lesson Order

- Opening Prayer
- Intro / Recap last week's lesson
- Review the scripture readings
- Review the hymns of the day
- Read front page of handout together
- Use study guide lesson and Q&A
- Complete handout activities
- Preview next week's lesson
- Closing Prayer

Tips & Hints

- Use as much or as little of the content in this study guide helping the students discover how the Orthodox Faith can be a part of their daily life.
- Use open-ended questions, encouraging young people to share their experiences or ideas, drawing connections to the topics of the day, strengthening their relationship with Jesus Christ and His holy Orthodox Faith.
- Questions, ideas, feedback, and suggestions can be directed to the publisher at orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

✓ Goal

After completing this week's lesson, students should be able to articulate the following:

- How today's scripture readings and liturgical hymns apply to their life
- Understanding what God is expecting us to live as His followers and members of the Orthodox Faith
- How being part of the Orthodox Church gives us the tools and skills to live godly lives regardless of our circumstances
- Why they believe and follow Jesus Christ as Orthodox Christians

✕ Overview

Last Week

Was the first Sunday of the Great Fast when we celebrate having icons as aids in our efforts to grow closer to God.

In the gospel, we heard Christ calling the disciples to follow Him. Icons can serve as a reminder that Christ has a place in our daily life too, as His modern day disciples.

Our actions can be humble examples, inspiring others to "Come and See" why we follow Jesus Christ and a desire to know God.

Lent help us renew our focus and attention on growing closer to God.

This Week

The second Sunday of the Great Fast celebrates the life and teachings of St. Gregory Palamas, a famous bishop.

St. Gregory taught that our goal in life is to encounter God. By doing this, we can be transfigured into our true nature - rejecting sin to live in the Light of Christ.

St. Gregory's love and devotion to God is an example for us to know and believe in God as much as we can, avoiding wrong teachings about God.

📖 Apostolos / Epistle and Gospel Readings

Have one student read today's Apostolos/Epistle and another read the Gospel lesson.

Epistle/Apostol:
Hebrews 1:10-2:3

Gospel:
Mark 2:1-12

1. What is the author of today's epistle/apostol talking about?
2. How does the message of this epistle apply to our lives?

Possible Answers

- God established the heavens, the world, and our lives as expressions of His love
- St. Paul teaches us that despite humanity's fall and sin, God still loves us
- Jesus' death restores us to the relationship intended in Genesis
- God's love will never change
- Christ provides a path to heaven, the Church and the saints confirm Jesus is truly God and the source of our salvation from sin and death

1. What took place in today's lesson?
2. Why is this important for us living in the 21st century?

Possible Answers

- The men are examples of faith in God, inspiring us to put our own faith in action helping others
- The forgiveness of sins is necessary for our salvation - regardless of any physical or behavioral impairments
- By approaching Christ in repentance, we can be freed from sin and death
- We should do whatever we can to get closer to Christ
- Being an Orthodox Christian means doing more than standing in church one day a week

🎵 Hymnography

Have a student read the hymn(s) on the front page of the handout.

1. What do the hymns teach us about today's commemoration?
2. How can the message of these hymns apply to our lives?

Possible Answers

- St. Gregory is honored as a wise defender of the Church's teachings
- He was a great teacher who instructed many about the nature of God
- St. Gregory stands in the presence of God
- We can ask St. Gregory to pray for us, just as we ask our parents, friends, priest, and others to pray to God for us
- St. Gregory's writings remind us that knowing about God helps us know ourselves better

A Closer Look

Let's take a closer look at today's primary topic.

Summary of Gospel Reading

The gospel reading for today recounts how large crowds would gather to hear Jesus Christ speak. This didn't prevent some men from bringing their friend, a paralytic, to see Jesus. Their desire was so strong, they opened a hole in the roof and lowered their friend to Christ, who offers words of forgiveness to him.

The religious leaders are frustrated because only God can forgive sins. Jesus, as the Son of God, can (and does) forgive sins. He also teaches that all of us should forgive each other when we have sinned or been offended by someone else. Christ also teaches that we should repent before God when we sin.

What Does This Mean For Us?

Like the people in the reading, we should have a strong desire to hear what Jesus has to say and be in His presence. We can do this by coming to church, praying at home, reading the bible with our family, giving thanks to God for the blessing He has given us, and preparing and receiving the Eucharist.

Our faith in God can lead to a meaningful relationship with Him - one where we do His commandments and help those less fortunate. In our human weakness, each of us will sin. When we do, it's important to not get paralyzed and separated from God. Instead, we should do whatever possible to get back to God, seeking forgiveness and healing.

When we sin or fall short, we can use the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist to return to God. He loves us regardless of any physical limitation we might have, and what really matters for our salvation is repentance and forgiveness. It's the spiritual growth we make which brings us closer to Jesus, and the season of Great Lent is an excellent time to make meaningful efforts to make Jesus Christ a part of our life.

The faith we have can and will ebb and flow depending on the situations in our life, so it's important to ask God in prayer to help us grow closer, saying, "Lord, I believe - help my unbelief." In this way, Jesus will respond to our desire with love.

Wrap Up

As Orthodox Christians, we hear this gospel reading as an encouragement to get closer to God - to fight against the things which might seem important, but are temporary distractions from the really important part of this life: a relationship with God.

The season of Great Lent provides us with moments to pray more, fast more, and help those less fortunate more. By doing these things, we can draw closer to the Light of Christ which illumines the world from His empty tomb on Pascha.

We can, and should, want to be with God, because it's in His presence that we can become our true selves: children of God.

Discussion Questions

Choose from these possible questions to explore today's topic.

1. Why do we pray to Jesus Christ in our life?
2. Why do we attend liturgy and actively participate in the prayers, hymns, and receive the Eucharist?
3. How can we be like the men who helped their friend?
4. How can we be good Christians at school? the mall? at church? at home?

Possible answers

- Our behavior reveals what type of Orthodox Christian we choose to be in life
 - We can be merciful, forgiving, repentant, compassionate (without fanfare or drawing attention to ourselves)
 - We can avoid gossip, lying, stealing, being greedy, or lazy, or judging, or needing to control things/people/situations
5. Why is receiving the Eucharist important?
 6. How can we prepare to receive the Eucharist?
 7. Why is the forgiveness of sins so important for our spiritual health?
 8. How should we feel after receiving the sacrament of confession?
 9. When we sin, what should we do?

Possible answers

- Forgive ourselves and run to God in repentance
- Reflect on why we might have fallen into sin, identifying ways to not do those bad things again
- Be grateful to God for the opportunity to again receive forgiveness and healing through His mercy

What the Saints Say

Hear what they say about today's topic.

“Whenever there was need to punish or to honor, to forgive sins or to make laws, Christ was fully authorized to do it. Whenever Christ had to do any of these much greater things, you will not characteristically find him praying or calling on his Father for assistance. All these things, as you discover in the text, he did on his own authority.”

– **St. John Chrysostom (5th century)**

“But the good Instructor, the Wisdom, the Word of the Father, who made man, cares for the whole nature of His creature; the all-sufficient Physician of humanity, the Saviour, heals both body and soul. “Rise up “He said to the paralytic; “take the bed on which thou liest, and go away home.”

– **St. Clement of Alexandria (3rd century)**

Terminology

Compassion: The act of being charitable or merciful to another or ourselves. Being compassionate is also a way we can be like God, who (as it says in the psalms) is “merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

Being compassionate means giving of ourselves, using our gifts and resources to help someone less fortunate or someone in need.

Faith: The virtue which is the foundation for all we do as Orthodox Christians. It is through faith that we believe in God, trust in God’s mercy, and are obedient to His teachings and commandments.

Faith is referenced throughout scripture as being the source of hope, love, and all the good things of this world. It is through faith that we trust in God’s love and mercy, that God will protect and keep us throughout our lives.

Through faith, we rely on God. And through faith, we come to know God, desiring to understand and know God as much as we can, so that we can grow closer to Him. And, as we grow closer to God in faith, we come to see ourselves as part of a larger community to which we are responsible to bring God’s love into the world through our words and actions - bringing our faith to life.

Preview

Next Week

The third Sunday of the Great Fast reminds us that our journey through Great Lent will lead us to the cross of Christ.

We are called to make every effort to be active Orthodox Christians who love God and want to be with Him.

The Church encourages us to stay focused, with more prayer, fasting, and helping others than we usually do outside of Lent.

By denying ourselves we learn humility and compassion, drawing closer to God, living a life of holiness like the saints.

On The Web

Learn more about this week's topics on the web:

Homily on St. Gregory Palamas Sunday

(3:57 min)

https://youtu.be/e1vDU0xB_T8

Fasting and Great Lent

<http://ww1.antiochian.org/fasting-great-lent>

The Light of Christ *(as proclaimed during the Presanctified Liturgy)*

<https://www.oca.org/reflections/berzonsky/light-of-christ>

Did You Know

In 1369, the Second Sunday of Great Lent was dedicated to St. Gregory for his defending the teachings of the Church.

If there was a theme for the Second Sunday of Great Lent it would build on the message of Having Faith from last week.

It’s not simply enough for Christians to believe in God, we also need to put our faith in action.

St. Gregory’s actions remind us that our faith must lead to an active life as Orthodox Christians.

