

Eastern Christian Bible Class
Gospel of St. Mark
Chapter 10

If there is time: Review Christology question from last class looking at CCC #468-469 also note the reference to the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople II) and the example from our Byzantine Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

Read Mk 10:1-9

Background, OBS (Orthodox Bible Study, Archpriest Fr. Lawrence Farley): Our Lord heads south to the area of Judea **called Perea**, the area beyond the Jordan, which was the jurisdiction of King Herod **Antipas** and was a dangerous place for Him. **It was the area of St. John the Baptist's ministry before his martyrdom.**

So His enemies take this opportunity to test Him. Perhaps they hope to provoke Him into making a statement about divorce that they could use report Him to Herod (whose own divorce and remarriage was very controversial). Opposition to that divorce had led to John the Baptist's martyrdom (6:17).

Recall Mark has told us more than once in this Gospel that there was an "unholy alliance" b/t the Pharisees and Herod's men (3:6).

-This is a trick question by the Pharisees b/c everyone knew (based on Deut 24:1-3) **that** a man could divorce his wife if there was a "cause of shame" in her (Deut 24:1-3). The only question was what was meant by "a cause of shame." There were two main Jewish interpretations:

1. Those following Hillel said that it meant any act that displeases the husband. So they allowed divorce for any reason at all.
2. Those following Shammai said the phrase meant sexual unchastity, so they allowed divorce only for unfaithfulness.

Hillel's interpretation, not surprisingly, was more popular.

So what is Jesus' response (v. 3)? "What did Moses command you?" What is their response (v. 4)?

Notice they don't answer what Moses "commanded" but what Moses "allowed" (by concession). But this concession did not get to the heart of the original divine intention for marriage. It was only allowed for people's hardness of heart.

Why did God allow Divorce in the Old Testament? See ICSB Note 10:4 @ Divorce...

Jesus (v. 6) points them to the positive Mosaic commandment in the opening chapters of the Law at the beginning of creation (Genesis 1 & 2). There God made mankind a duality, both male and female (Gen. 1:27), not two autonomous beings, who might form a union as it suits them and be dissolved any time they wanted.

In other words marriage is not a mere legal contract which can be dissolved by a piece of paper (a bill of divorce). It's the creation of new a newly united organism (one flesh, v. 7-8). What God made and formed together should thus not be separated by man.

All of this means that divorce was never meant by God. Both of the above mentioned [interpretative] schools were wrong by not going far enough and penetrating into the heart of the Law.

Divorce was allowed but it was always a tragedy. Now that Christ had come and the Kingdom was at hand, it was God's will to overcome this tragedy. Christ's call is to return to the original intention of God for man & woman.

OSB notes on Mt. 5:31, 32, Mt. 19:3-9, 19:9.

"The Orthodox Church has always mourned divorce as a fall from the norms of the Kingdom, and has reluctantly allowed it in order to restore her broken ones to the Church's Communion after a period of penance." P. 160

-This is our historic Eastern Tradition which the Pope of Rome, Francis, pointed to as an example for consideration. Eastern Catholics adopted the Latin Church Tradition in dealing with divorce (annulments or declarations there never was a real marriage based on certain criteria). Both traditions (East & West) agree divorce is wrong and not in accord with God's will and the teaching of Christ. This truth we hold in common. p. 156-160

Read Mk 10:10-12

OBS: The apostles, apparently having some difficulty with Jesus' words, ask the Lord again about this (v. 10). So He repeats it again in the form of two blunt statements, so that there could be no doubt.

OBS: Note that in this passage our Lord goes beyond the rabbinic teaching which was normally considered as an offense of the wife against the husband but our Lord extends it to also apply to the offense of a husband against his wife (v. 12). The bond uniting the two as one flesh remained for both.

ICSB: This would've spoken directly to pagans such as St. Mark's immediate readers in Rome. In ancient Rome, where men and women share the right to initiate divorce. Plus this double warning may have also been intended to address the well-known story of Herod Antipas since both of them abandoned their spouses before their unlawful marriage.

The disciples had not misunderstood their Lord's intention. His married disciples were not to divorce one another if they wanted to remain true to God's perfect will. p. 160

Read Mk 10:13-16

OBS: Its likely that this occurred at the end of a long, exhausting day of teaching. Perhaps Jesus was resting or even dozing, and they were motivated by a desire to protect Him from interruption. Child also had no social status in those days, and the request that Jesus come out and touch their children seemed to the disciples trivial and unworthy. Should they wake the exhausted Master for this? p. 161

What is Jesus' response (v. 14 & 15)?

OSB Note Mt. 19:13-15

OBS: The characteristic of children here commended was not so much innocence but their free and open reception of Jesus and His love. They had no status, no claims they could press. Unlike the proud Pharisees, who relied on their own righteousness and pressed their claims to be the inheritors of the Kingdom based on their own merits, the children came with open hearts and open hands. They came to Jesus, trusting in His love, and expecting to be blessed simply because they wanted His love. This is how the Kingdom must be received by anyone. As Jesus said, unless we "welcome the Kingdom of God as a child" (v. 15), i.e. with complete trust

and humility, we will never enter into it. Pharisaical pride and self-righteousness will exclude us from the Kingdom. P. 162-163

Read Mk 10:17-22

OBS: This next story of the Rich Young Man serves as a counterpoint to the story of the children who openly received the blessing which Christ had to offer.

OBS: In responding, "Why do you call me good," Jesus does not deny that He is good or that He is God. The focus of his question is not on Himself or His goodness, but on the man's conception of goodness. The Lord wants him to know that only God is absolutely good. He doubtless thought of himself as a good man, one who came to ask the way from another good man. Christ stops him from this false line of reasoning at the start. Only by recognizing the true and only source of goodness (i.e. God) and his own spiritual poverty can he come to know the truth.

OSB note Mt 19:16,17

OSB note Mt 19:20

OBS: The Lord points him to God's commandments. [ICSB: God's moral laws are still true in the New Testament]. As Christians we believe the Ten Commandments (as it states in the new Universal Catechism), forever lead us to moral maturity and remain essential to our pursuit of eternal life (CCC 2068, 2072).

As expected, the man's emphatic **that he's** kept the **Commandments**. The Lord recognizes the void that the rich young man feels is a sign that God is calling him to His Kingdom and true discipleship.

OBS: So Jesus invites him to go sell all he has, give it to the poor, and then he will have treasure in heaven, then he should come follow Christ.

OBS: The rich young man has two choices: he can choose poverty and becoming a follower of this wonder-working Teacher, or he can choose to remain in a life of wealth and ease, and continue to wrestle with the void in his heart. In the end he chooses to remain with his riches over the joy of following Christ. P. 165-166

OSB note Mt 19:21;

Read Mk 10:23-31

OBS: To be a disciple of Jesus Christ, one must deny oneself and renounce the hope of popularity and comfort (8:34), embracing instead the persecutions that were sure to come if one followed Jesus. This was very difficult for those who had wealth. P. 167

The disciples, are astonished at His words because in their culture they regarded wealth as a sign of God's blessing. If the rich had such difficulty entering the Kingdom, what hope was there for the rest, who (they assumed) had less divine favor!?

Rather than softening his words, what does Jesus then say (v. 24-25)? He doubles down with the famous statement, "It's easier for a camel..." I. O. W. without God, it's humanly impossible (v. 27).

Monasticism is one proof of this. Through the power of God, many rich men were able to renounce their wealth in order to follow God. St. Anthony the Great is one powerful example.

Peter, speaking for the others, looking for reassurance after this startling revelation of Christ then points out although the rich man wasn't willing to leave everything, the disciples had! Jesus reassures Peter and the apostles, whatever we leave or give up for Christ and His Gospel, this will be more than compensated for. Because Christ gives us what we truly need and only He can fulfill our heart's desires.

OSB Note Mt. 19:29

Finally (v. 31) our Lord teaches us that the Kingdom overthrows all of the standards of this world,. Those important here will not necessarily be important there. Many who are first in this age will be last in the age to come. How unimportant wealth and position are. So the apostles can rejoice in all they have renounced for the Kingdom.

Read Mk 10:32-34

OBS: Jesus gives the third and final prediction of his passion which is most detailed naming the conspirators.

OSB note 10:32-34

Read Mk 10:35-40

OSB Note Mt 20:20-23

Read Mk 10:41-45

OSB Note Mk 10:45

Read Mk 10:46-52

OSB Note Mk 10:46-52

Sub-Deacon Lazarus Der-Ghazarian
St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
23300 King Dr., Clinton Twp, MI, Eparchy of Parma
<http://www.stnicksdetroit.com/>

Webservant - St. Gregory the Illuminator Institute
<http://www.looys.net/>

"With God all things are possible... We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us... Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!"