

Eastern Christian Bible Class
Gospel of St. Mark
Chapter Nine

READ 9:1

OSB Note 9:1

ADD: The Church is God's kingdom on earth.

The Church, like the Transfiguration, is a foretaste of God's coming kingdom and our chance to participate in it. This is why the first words of every Divine Liturgy are what? "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father & of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." By far the Church is the closest thing to experiencing the kingdom of God this side of the eternity.

ICSB [Ignatius Catholic Study Bible]: While the Church is a participation in God's kingdom on earth, His kingdom will be fully made known at the 2nd coming.

READ 9:2-8

OSB NOTE 9:2-13

ICSB [Ignatius Catholic Study Bible] 9:5 "booths" –small shelters in which the Israelites dwelt during the liturgical feast of Booths (Lev 23:39-43). Peter asks to build these out of his desire to extend this heavenly vision.

READ 9:9-13

ICSB: 9:10 "rising from the dead" –Most Jews during NT times accepted belief in a collective resurrection (Dan 12:2, Jn 11:23-25; Acts 24:15). Only the Sadducees denied it (12:18).

OBS [Orthodox Bible Study by Fr. Lawrence Farley] p. 141 - As Jews, they knew what the final rising of the dead was to be: It was the end, the Last Day, when God would raise up all who had ever lived and make them stand before His awesome Judgment Seat to receive their eternal reward.

But Jesus seemed to mean something else - something coming soon [...] after which they could tell everyone what they had seen. They reasoned that He couldn't have meant the final resurrection of all, because after that event the present age will be over, and there won't be any need for telling anyone anything.

It almost seemed as if He were going to die. But that didn't fit with their vision of Elijah and the expected redemption by the Messiah. In their usual teaching, Elijah the prophet would return to earth, perhaps on his fiery chariot- and restore all things. It would be a time of life, blessing and universal righteousness. So there was no place for talk of death.

The Lord corrects their view (v. 12): Elijah does indeed come first, this WILL be to restore all things, but it is also written (e.g. Is 53, Ps 21 LXX) that the Messiah (or Son of Man) would suffer many things and be rejected.

OSB NOTE 9:13, cf. Mt 17:13

READ 9:14-20

ICSB 9:17 “mute spirit” – Demon possession is sometimes manifested through sickness, seizures and self-inflicted injuries. Just b/c these are physical infirmities, this doesn't negate the spiritual dimension of the condition.

OBS, p. 143 Christ's adversaries, the scribes, were there debating with the disciples (v. 14). It appears the disciples had been challenged to heal a poor, afflicted boy and were unable. The scribes used this failure as an opportunity to deny Christ's power and mission.

OBS, p. 144 What was at stake (besides the recovery of the boy) was the authority and teachings of Jesus. In bringing the boy to His disciples, the father was in fact bringing him to Jesus Himself (v. 17, "I brought him to You").

OBS: The Apostle's failure, according to St. Matthew is from lack of faith (cf. Mt 17:19-20). This is seen as a reflection on Jesus' authenticity (Mk 9:17 & 18b). This can also be said of us. When we fail to do what Christ asks us, the world sees this as demonstrating the untruthfulness of Christianity.

READ 9:21-29

OBS, p. 145 - Jesus asks the father, (v. 21) 'How long' not b/c He needs the info to heal the boy, but because His heart went out to him. Out of compassion our Lord asks them how long they have endured this. As the man is explaining this, watching his son rolling around in degrading agony, finally his heart bursts with grief and he cries out: "If you can do anything, have compassion on us..." (v. 22).

OBS, p. 146 - Notice Jesus repeats the father's words but directs them back where they properly belong: onto the father: "If you can!" Jesus says, repeating the father's words, with exasperation. The question is not whether Jesus can heal (that's already been established by this time); it is rather whether the father can have faith -for "all things are possible to him who believes."

Q. What is the father's response? A. "I believe! Help my unbelief."

Jesus quickly rebukes the unclean spirit and by so doing He stresses His own sovereign power. He states, "I Myself command you" (the "I" is emphatic in Greek).

OBS: P. 147 After the miracle, the scribes are again confounded. They had smugly rejoiced in the disciples' inability to cast out the demon as evidence of Christ's inability to rule over demons, but once again they find Jesus' power to be far greater than they anticipated.

OBS: P. 147 Next the disciples can hardly wait to be alone with the Lord to ask Him the question that's burning in their hearts: "Why were we not able to cast it out?" So they ask this when they come into the house. They had cast out demons before but this spirit was different. It was a greater and more powerful demon than the others (just like archangels are greater than angels). This kind could not be cast out by anything but concentrated prayer and fasting.

This again is a lesson for us. If we are struggling with a certain sin or demon in our lives, we too must turn to concentrated prayer & fasting to overcome it.

OSB Note Mt 17:14-16

OSB Note Mt 17:19-21

READ 9:30-32

OBS: p. 148 Unlike previous travels through Galilee, filled with public preaching, this journey is a quiet one. Jesus' aim was not to preach to as many as He could but simply to pass through the territory on the way Jerusalem. This is why it says that He did not want anyone to know (v. 30). This was a time to privately teach his disciples.

OBS p. 148 Just as in last chapter (cf. 8:32) when Peter began to rebuke the Lord for saying he would be killed, they did not understand His word. As good Jews, their minds were filled with expectations of a glorious Messiah to triumph heroically. Any ideas of defeat and death, according to their understanding, were incompatible with messianic office.

OSB Note 9:30-32

READ 9:33-37

OBS, p. 149: As they journey from the foot of Mt. Tabor to Capernaum, the disciples after experiencing the glory of Christ's coming kingdom, probably began to think of their own places in it. Apparently a dispute (v. 33), somewhat heated, broke out regarding "who would be the greatest" in the coming kingdom (v. 34).

Q. What was their answer when our Lord's questions them about this?

A. No answer is recorded as given. Their answer was probably silence.

OSB Note Mt 18:1-4

ICSB 9:35 "servant of all" – Greatness in God's eyes is measure by humility and service to others – something exemplified by Jesus Himself. As future leaders of the Church, the apostles must avoid aspirations for worldly honor and attention in order to serve Christ more faithfully and effectively (8:35; CCC 876, 896).

READ 9:38-41

SKIP - OSB Note Lk 9:46-50b

READ 9:42-50

OSB Note 9:42

OSB Note 9:43-48, cf. Mt 18:8a

Cf. Jesus words (Mt. 11:12), "...from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

OSB Note 9:43-48, cf. Mt 18:8b

St. John Chrysostom states about this passage: When close friends drag Christians away from holiness, they must be cut away (St. Paul says, "Do not be deceived: evil company ruins good morals." 1 Cor 15:33). It is better for us to enter heaven without them than to mating their company in everlasting misery.

OBS, p. 155 CONCLUSION:

Our Lord concludes His rebuke of their pride over the first place (v. 34) with a parabolic saying about salt. Salt was used in those day for a variety of purposes, including offering in the Temple sacrifices (Lev. 2:13). Salt was seen as making the sacrifice acceptable to God, since it was a symbol of covenant loyalty. (In those days, when one pledged loyalty by eating with another, one would share salt as part of the meal. So that salt became a symbol of unbreakable loyalty (cf. Num 18:19). To this day, our visiting bishops are traditionally met with gifts of bread and salt b/c of this.

Building on this, Jesus says that every one of His disciples will be salted with the fire of the Holy Spirit. In other words, those in the world might quarrel and betray one another, but His disciples were called to be different from the world. By keeping within themselves the fire of the Spirit, they would remain faithful and loyal to each other. Like Temple sacrifices -they would be made acceptable to Him when salted with the Spirit's fire, which would preserve them in peace. That salt was good only if it remained salty. Otherwise it was useless and fit only to be thrown out.

Same with those who lose the saltiness of the Spirit and quarrel like those in the world. Those who wish to be acceptable sacrifices to God must have this salt among themselves and be at peace and have nothing to do with jealous fighting (cf. the front of our Liturgicon).

This has applications for all of us:

The unity of the Church finds its daily support in this experience of the Spirit. That unity is a divine and irrevocable gift and quality of the Church [why we say "one" in the Nicene Symbol] but... in our daily lives we have to preserve this unity between each other in our parishes as we remain on fire with the Spirit. If we allow this divine Fire to grow cold in us, we can

transgress the unity and love between us in the Church. This damages the oneness which our Lord said would show the world we are His (Jn 17).

Glory to Jesus Christ!

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"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!"