

# FOLLOW ME

## LESSON FIVE: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK 3



### FAST FACTS

- Pharisees and Herodians plotted to murder Jesus.
- Jesus healed a man with a withered hand.
- Jesus was angry that the Pharisees and Herodians tried to use the Sabbath as an excuse for not helping a sick person.
- Jesus was accused of being empowered by Satan to expel demons, but He made it clear that Satan would not empower Jesus to destroy demonic power.
- Knowingly, continually, and unrepentantly ascribing the work of God to evil powers is the unforgivable sin.
- In verses 30-35 Jesus is not being disrespectful to the Theotokos and His family, but instead is emphasizing the importance of being in a faithful relationship with God.

### MAP



## MARK 3:1-12

The Pharisees — this time with a political party, the Herodians — again tried to trap Jesus by claiming that He violated the Sabbath. They criticized Him for healing a man with a shrunken, useless hand, but He responded by asking a rhetorical question: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill” (vs. 3)? The Pharisees refused to answer because they knew that they couldn’t approve of doing harm, but only actions that would directly save a life were allowed according to their understanding of the Sabbath.

Jesus became angry because they so misunderstood the reason for the Sabbath that they even refused to help an underprivileged person. Notice what He did when He became angry: He healed the man with the withered hand. Blessed Augustine teaches us that it is right to become angry when we see injustices: “When such affections as anger are directed to their proper objects, they are following good reasoning.” We should not, however, simply become angry — like Jesus, we should also work to correct injustice. St. Athanasius the Great points

### TIME TRAVEL

The Pharisees were a movement from approximately 150 BC - 70 AD that was dedicated to an exact observance of Jewish law; their teachings and practices are very influential on modern Judaism. Herodians were a group who politically supported the house of Herod, which was the ruling family for much of Palestine.



## LOOK AT YOURSELF

There is injustice all around us. Many people are sick and suffering. What can you as an individual, and others in your Teen SOYO group, do to help those in your community who are less privileged? Your priest may know of people in your parish who need help with yardwork or other chores that would be easy for you, and would be a great help to them. Don’t let your mind become withered through lack of caring for the needs of others!

out that, if we see injustice and refuse to correct it, we are like the Pharisees and Herodians in these verses: we have seen Jesus heal a withered hand, and yet our minds remain withered and untouched by Jesus’ love.

St. Mark gives an indication of Jesus’ growing popularity by listing some of the cities and regions from which people came to see Him: they include most of Judea and its neighbors. Jesus again heals people and exorcises demons, commanding the demons to keep His identity as the Messiah a secret.

# MARK 3:13-18

The calling of the twelve Disciples tells us a great deal about what it means to be called as a priest or bishop to serve the Church. First, as the *Orthodox Study Bible* notes, Jesus *appointed* the Disciples, rather than simply accepting volunteers. Second, the fact they were appointed and then spent several years in an intimate relationship with Jesus shows that priests and bishops must be mature Christians who are close to the Lord. Third, as is shown by the power Jesus gave the Disciples to heal sicknesses and cast out demons, the Disciples were empowered to heal and restore God's people.



# OUR FAITH TEACHES

The Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious, and All-Praised Twelve Apostles (June 30):

Troparion in Tone 4

*O first-enthroned of the Apostles, Teachers of the Universe: Entreat the Master of all to grant peace to the world, And great mercy to our souls!*

Kontakion in Tone 2

*Today Christ the Rock glorifies with highest honor the rock of Faith and leader of the Apostles, together with Paul and the company of the Twelve, whose memory we celebrate with eagerness of faith, giving glory to the one who gave glory to them!*

# MARK 3:20-35

St. Mark shows us that many people were concerned by Jesus' ability to exorcise demons. Some members of His family, fearing for His safety and worried because of the strong reaction people had to His ministry, were afraid that He was controlled by a demon. St. Matthew tells us that the people began to wonder if His authority over demons was evidence that He was the Messiah (Matthew 12:23), causing a group of Pharisees to come from Jerusalem and try to turn the crowds against Jesus by saying, "No, He's not the Messiah! In fact, He can only expel demons because Be-el'zebul himself gives Jesus this ability" (see Mark 3:22)!

Jesus proved the stupidity of this claim with a simple point: His ministry overthrows Satan and destroys the demonic power of evil. Why would Satan give Jesus the ability to overthrow Satan's kingdom?

Many people have misunderstood Jesus' statement that blaspheming the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven: what does it mean that this is the "unforgivable sin?" St. Cyprian

of Carthage, a third century saint, explains that this refers to Christians who knowingly reject God, and call His power evil: "After inspiration and revelation have come to a person, there is no pardon on account of ignorance for him — that is, if he has willfully and knowingly continued in that course in which he has erred. For he resists [God] with a certain presumption and obstinacy."

Many Christians have also misunderstood Jesus' question, "Who are my mother and my brothers (vs. 33). Some people believe that this means we shouldn't venerate the Theotokos, since Jesus didn't specifically praise her here. Instead, however, Jesus is emphasizing the importance of our relationship to God. St. Paul says that all Christians are sons of God through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:26), prompting St. Clement of Rome to write in the first century, "So let us do the will of the Father who called us, that we may live peaceably within this family, where our inclination shall be the pursuit of virtue."

# LOOK AT YOURSELF

Have you every worried that you committed a sin too terrible for God to forgive? The Bible teaches us that for Christ's sake the Father forgives our sins (Ephesians 4:32), and He no longer holds against us sins that He has forgiven (Hebrews 10:17). St. John Chrysostom therefore states, "Thou dost not so much desire thy sins to be forgiven, as He desires to forgive thee thy sins." Confession is a wonderful gift given to us by our loving, forgiving God because, as the *The Shepherd of Hermas* states, "To all the believers He grants remission of sins until the day of resurrection, if they repent with all their hearts."

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## WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS?

- Have I allowed my mind to become withered to the suffering of others? What would Jesus have me do?
- I know better than to believe that the work of the Holy Spirit

is evil. What, however, do I really know about the work of God in the Mysteries of the Church?

- Jesus says that Christians are sons and daughters of the Father. Do I have the close relationship with Him that a child should have with a Father?

