Blessed is the Kingdom: An Orthodox Church School Curriculum

Lesson 15 **3rd-5th grades**

Scripture: The Gospel

Objective: Students will understand that the purpose of the Gospels is to show Christ in His glory and draw us to Christ.

Lesson Introduction 5 min

Start by **reviewing** the part of the Liturgy called "The Little Entrance" either by reading through that part of the service or watching it. **Ask**:

> *What do you notice during this part of the service?* (Things to point out could be altar servers, candles, the procession, the hymns sung, everyone is standing and alert)
>
> *What is central to the Little Entrance?* (The Gospel book)
>
> *It is called an "entrance" because we enter into God's presence. Hearing "the Word" or "the Gospel" read is like having an audience with God. We stand when this happens to honor the presence of Christ in our midst.*
>
> *The Gospels means "good news" or "glad tidings". They were written to give glory to God and transform us.*

Hold up the magnifying glass. **Explain**:

> *This is a magnifying glass. What happens when you look through it?* (Item is bigger.) *The item does not actually grow or change size, but it allows us to see it better. We can then notice all of the fine details.*
>
> *Giving glory to God is like being a magnifying glass. We do not make God bigger because remember He is already omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), and omnipresent (fills all things). But by giving glory to God we are transformed and His presence in us is magnified. Our talents and love for others is magnified in God's presence.*

Opening Prayer

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good one.

Liturgy Links

https://www.oca.org/media/video/20th-aac-thursday-morning-divine-liturgy

The Gospel

Skip to 48:40-50:57 for this portion

Supplies Needed

- Magnifying glass
- Small object like a leaf or coin

Lesson—25 min

Supplies Needed

- Walk through the Gospel Printable (cutout)—one classroom copy
- Paper or board to act as a timeline
- Orthodox Student Bibles (one for each student)
- Bucket or bowl
- Cotton balls
- Staircase, step ladder, or stepping stool
- Green streamers
- Snack or treat
- Tape
- Stone to roll

Teacher Resources

OCA Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction

https://www.oca.org/cdn/PDFs/2023-0609-EOCB.pdf

Chapter 8 Meeting Christ, Understanding, and Being Transformed

The Gospels

https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/doctrine-scripture/new-testament/gospels

Begin by **asking:**

> *Who were the four Gospels written by?* (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) *They tell us about Christ's life. They are considered the Center of the Bible. Just as Christ is the center of the Church. As such the Gospels are enthroned on the altar. Each Gospel follows a similar pattern of showing us Christ's life. Today we are going to take a walk through the Gospels to learn more about Christ's life.*

Have a long piece of paper with a line drawn down the middle of it like a timeline ready to go. If you have a dry erase board, you could always use that by drawing a line horizontally down the center. Have the "**Walk through the Gospel Printable**" **printed** and **cut out**, so that you can attach the images to the timeline as you go through the journey of Christ's life. Start the journey by having half of the students **look up Matthew 1:18-25**; and the other half looking up **Luke 2:1-14.** Once they have looked over those chapters, **ask**:

> *How does Jesus's story begin?* (His birth) *What is taking place in the Nativity icon?*

Take answers, and then **tape** it onto the timeline. Continue having students add icons to the timeline throughout the journey.

> *After Jesus's birth, he grew up. Let's find the next major event in our Bibles.*

Split up students to **look up** the following**: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-32**. After students have done this, **ask** them to explain what is happening in the Theophany icon.

> *After His baptism, Jesus began looking for people to help Him with His ministry. These became His disciples or apostles. He called them fishers of men as they were looking for people to believe in Christ and follow him, much like a fisherman would be looking for fish. Let's pretend that we are Jesus's disciples and are looking to fill our "nets" with fish or seeking people to follow Christ.*

Set up a bucket or a bowl (acting as a net) across the room, **give** each child ten cotton balls (acting as fish) and see how many they can **toss** into the bucket. After everyone had a turn, **say**:

Lesson Continued

5 Minute Bonus

The Gospel Book
Have your priest bring the Gospel book out to show your class. He could even show where it is kept on the Altar.

Supplemental Ideas

Lesson 5 Craft "God is…" Poster Revisited

If you still have your sample of the Lesson 5 Craft the "God is…" Poster, you could pull it out to review along with the introduction to this lesson. Remind them of the movements you made up to help you remember each of the traits: omniscient (all knowing)—pointing to your head; omnipotent (all powerful)—making muscles; and omnipresent (fills all things)—spin in a circle.

Take Home Timeline

If you have time, you could always have each student create their own timeline of Jesus's life. You could print extra copies of the icons you used in the lesson and have them glue them. Or you could have them draw their own pictures along the timeline to represent each event.

After gathering His disciples or apostles, Jesus took a few of them—Peter, James, and John, and led them up onto a high mountain. Here they witnessed Jesus's divinity as His face shone like the sun, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My Beloved Son." Let's journey up the mountain with them today.

If you have a staircase in your parish that is accessible, now would be the time to **walk** to it and **ascend** it. If you do not have a staircase, you could use a stepladder and have each child climb up and down it or simply a stepping stool or an aerobic step to step up and then down. If possible this is a good time to leave the classroom to "climb" the mountain, so that you have to process back to it.

Grab green streamers and have the students **wave** them while **proclaiming**: "Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." **Process** from the staircase or stepping stool location back to the classroom. **Show** the Palm Sunday icon.

Have all students **sit** in a circle or at the classroom table. **Give** each a snack or small treat. Split them up to look up the following: **Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-19. Discuss** the icon of the Last Supper. **Ask** students what they notice and who is in it.

After the Last Supper, Christ is arrested and is crucified.

Show the icon of the Crucifixion and **ask**:

What do you notice in the icon? (**Take** answers, and then **continue**) *As we know Jesus's story doesn't end here.*

Show the Pascha icon and ask them what they notice in it. After they comment, **continue:**

When the myrrh bearing women arrived at Jesus's tomb, what did they find? (An empty tomb) *The stone was rolled away.*

Make a square box on the floor with tape roughly a foot by a foot. Have students try to roll a stone into the box. Just as the tombstone was rolled away they are rolling a stone. Finally, **show** the icon of Ascension.

Forty days after His Resurrection, Christ ascended into Heaven to be glorified on the right hand of God.

Place the bucket or bowl from before on a high shelf or top of a tall step ladder. Have students try to **throw** the cotton balls into the bucket or bowl to create the cloud that Christ ascended into.

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Lesson Activities

Wooden Door Hangers—10 min

Supplies needed: wooden door hangers (9.5x3.25), gem stickers, paint, paint brushes, Modge Podge, "Matthew, Mark, Luke & John" printable

Prior to class print the Craft Printable.

Have students paint the wooden door hanger at the beginning of class or before playing the game. Have student cut out the icons and Bible verse.

Once dry, Modge Podge under and on top of the icons and scripture to attach it to the wooden door hanger. Then add gems to decorate it. Ask students to identify each of the Saints in the icons, and read through the scripture reading discussing what it means.

Christ at the Center Toss—10 min

Supplies needed: 1-3 balloons, room to sit or stand in a circle

Have students sit or stand in a circle. Ask them:

Who is the center of the Church? (Christ)

What books are considered the center of the Bible? (The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)

What book is central to the Little Entrance part of the Liturgy? (The Gospel)

Explain that you are going to try to keep the balloon at the center of the circle without it hitting the ground.

Toss the balloon in the air and have students keep gently tapping it to keep it in the air. Try timing how long they can keep it in the air or count how many times they can hit it before it falls to the ground. Try sitting or standing or move closer or further apart.

Closing Thoughts– 5 min

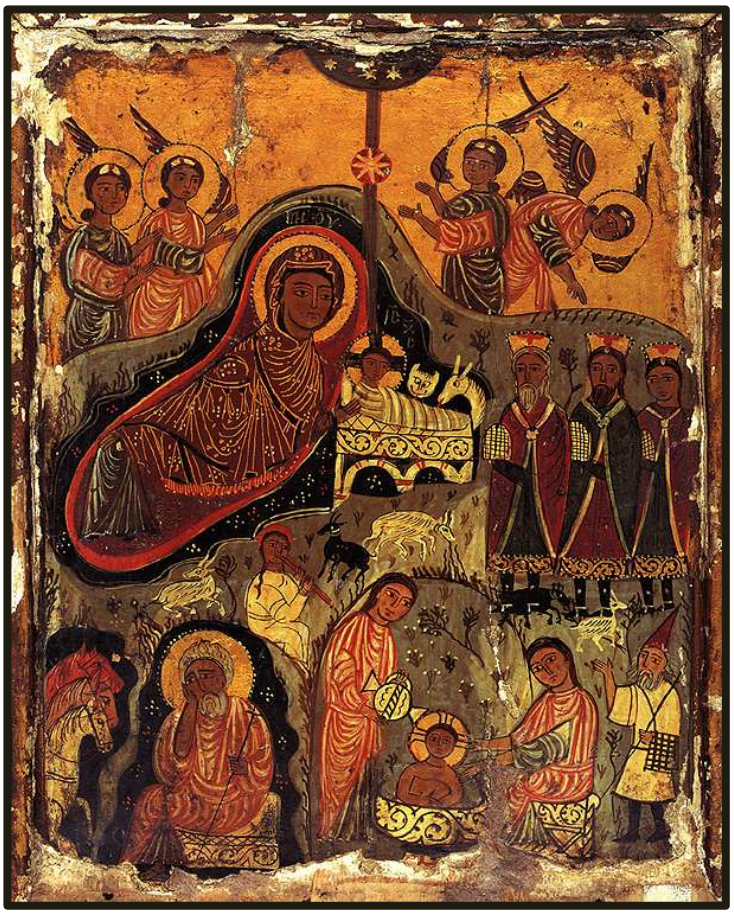
Ask students what is the purpose of the Gospel? Look for answers like the following:

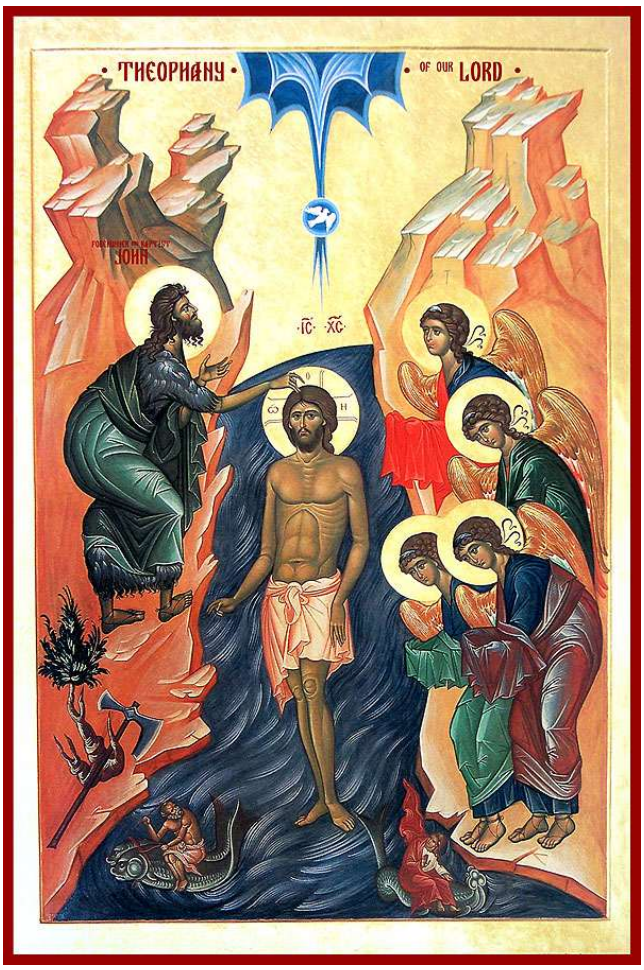
Show Christ in His glory. Take us through His life. Draw us to Christ. Help us keep Christ at the center of our lives.

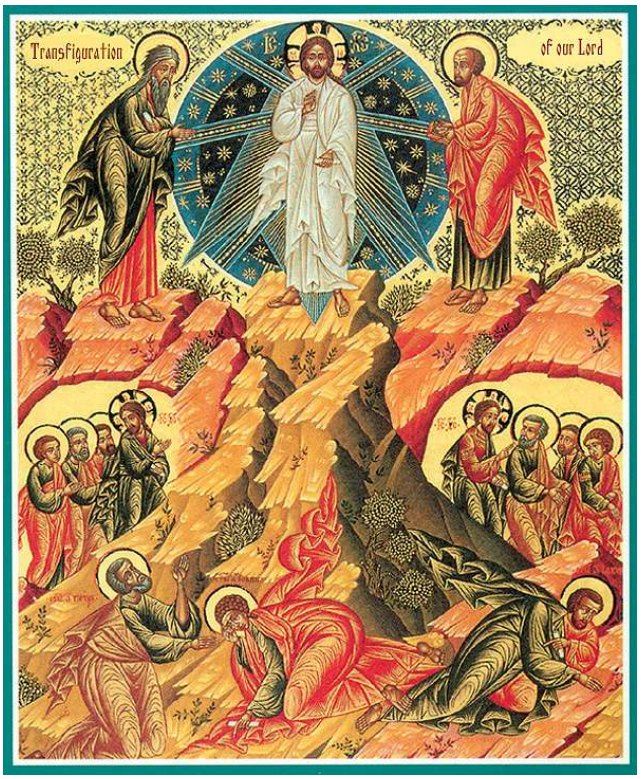
Closing Prayer

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you!

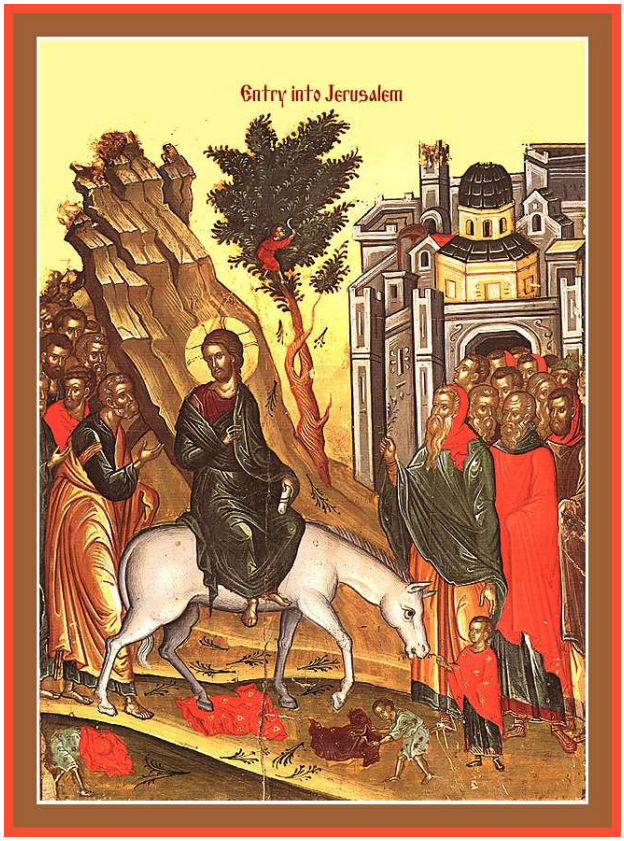
A Walk through the Gospels Printable Page 1

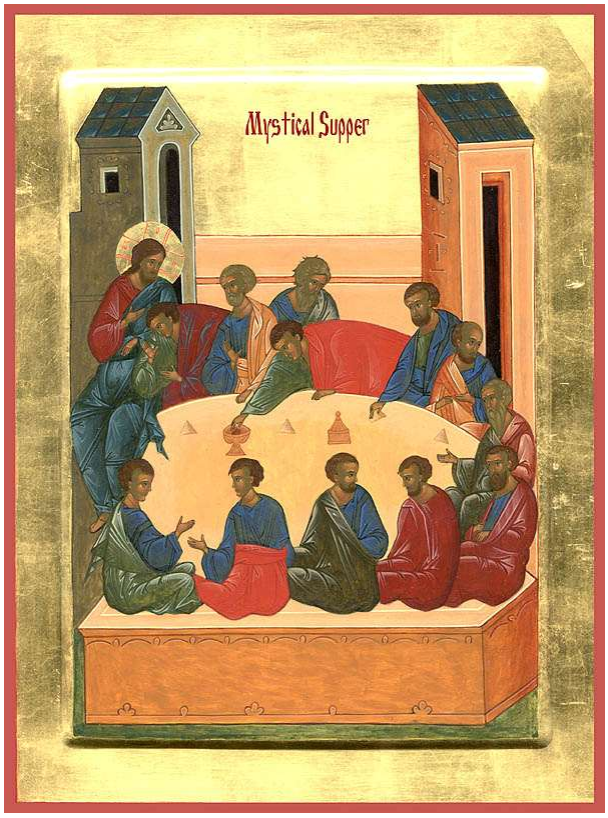


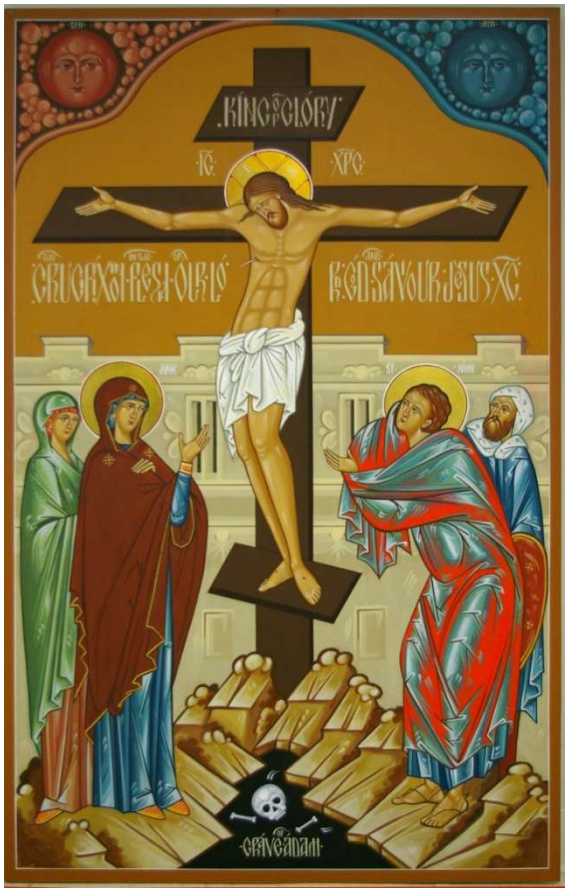


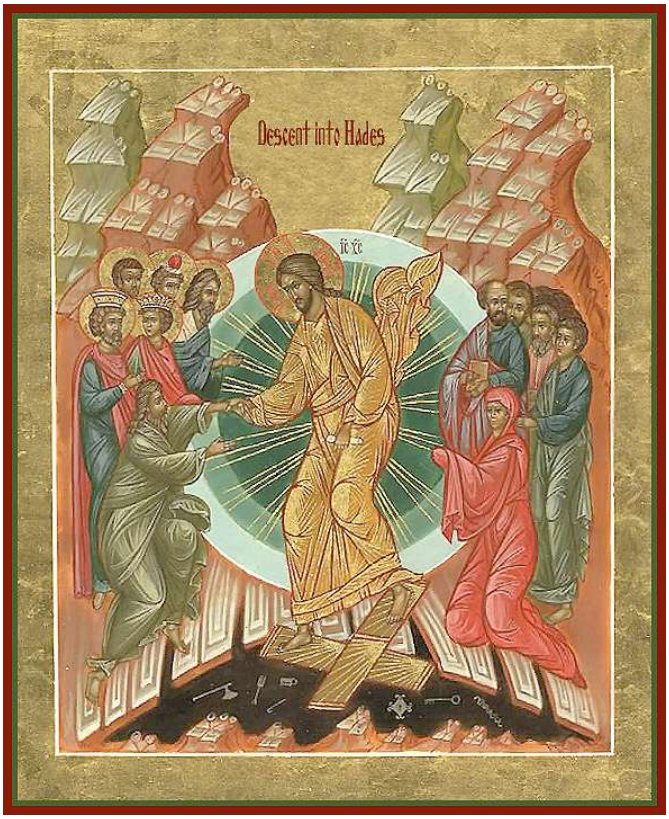


A Walk through the Gospels Printable Page 2

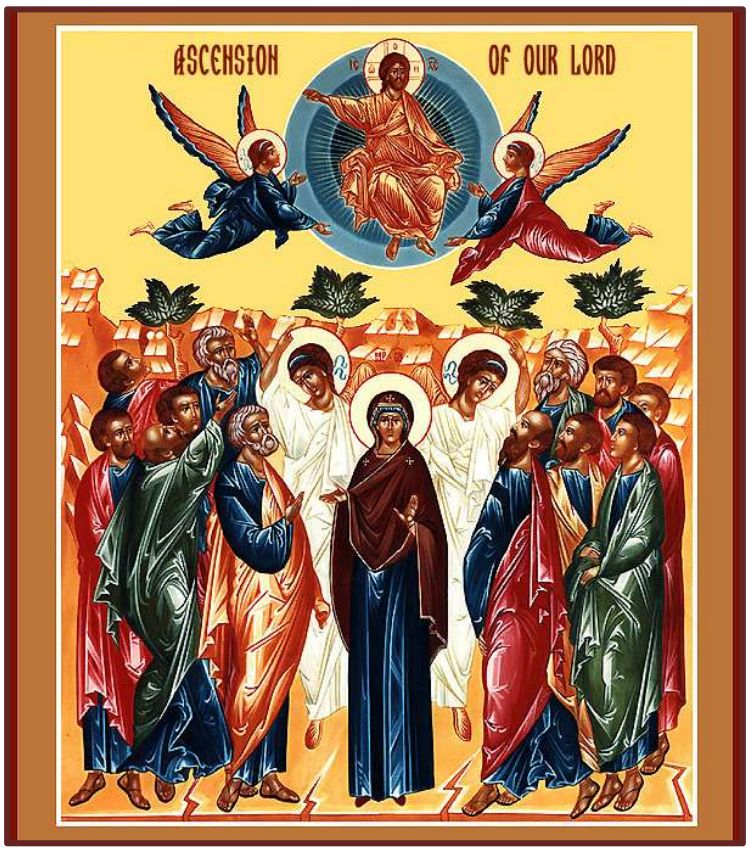




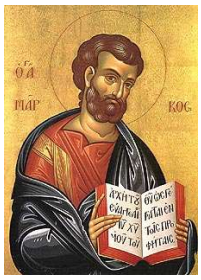




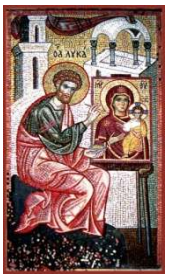
A Walk through the Gospels Printable Page 3



Lesson 15 Craft Printable



Ask,
and it will be given to you;
Seek,
and you will find;
Knock,
and it will be opened to you.
Matthew 7:7



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