

V EASTER 2014
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
ST. JAMES 1.22 ST. JOHN 16.23



Plowing the fields...scattering the good seed...asking God for the right amount of rain and the right amount of sunshine...and asking him to bless us with a bumper crop in the fall.

The Bible is full of images of fields of wheat...fruit trees...flowers...sheep being taken care of by their shepherd...all agricultural images at a time when most people made their living from working the land.

Most of us today don't make our living working the land. We don't give a second thought about where the fruit, vegetables, bread, or meat, on our dinner tables came from. But the food we eat is like our health, our homes, and our families...they are good gifts and perfect presents God blesses us with...and we should always thank him for them.

The Fifth Sunday after Easter is called Rogation Sunday and the three days following the Rogation Days. They form the Season called Rogationtide that leads up to Ascension Day. The word **rogation** comes from the Latin verb **rogare...to ask**.

We also see **rogare** in words like **interrogate**...to ask or question systematically; **abrogate**...to ask or propose an end to something; **subrogate**...to substitute a right or claim. All of these **askings** have to do with written or spoken words that are often applied in legal ways.

Rogationtide is about asking God for his blessings. Beginning in the fifth century, the custom developed in European countries of "beating the bounds"...holding a procession that went to every corner of the parish...asking God to bless the spring planting and for a bountiful harvest in the fall.

We can better understand Rogationtide when we think about harvesting crops...and harvesting souls. The good seeds that are planted in the ground in the spring eventually "die" and are "resurrected" as crops harvested in the fall.

We believe our bodies planted in the ground when we die will be resurrected into new and glorious bodies in heaven. Rogationtide is the fitting conclusion to the Easter Season and anticipates both the Ascension and coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Rogationtide is ultimately about prayer and prayer is asking God for both spiritual and material blessings. In the Collect we ask God to help us not only to think good things but also to do good works. The perfect prayer and a good place to start any conversation with God is the Lord's Prayer.

Farmers practice crop rotation so the nutrients in the soil don't get depleted, pests can be controlled,

and they don't have to rely on artificial fertilizers. They practice good stewardship of the land, something all of us should emulate. We are supposed to take care of the environment God created.

When we ask God for material blessings we assume the responsibility that comes along with the asking...we must try to be good stewards of the good gifts and perfect presents he blesses us with. Part of what it means to be a good steward is we have a duty as mature Christians to share what we have with those who are less fortunate.

James tells us that it isn't enough for us to just listen to the Good News about Jesus...we must put what we hear into practice. In James' time, orphans and widows were at a disadvantage. Social welfare programs didn't exist. Unless they had a friend or relative who was willing to take care of them, they could find themselves living on the streets.

Unfortunately, poverty, hunger, homeless people, widows and orphans, and unemployment are still present in the world today. Our successful food drive for CALL Primrose helps alleviate hunger for some people...but we can't stop there. We must do everything we possibly can using the good gifts and perfect presents God has given us, to provide hope for others.

Jesus tells us we should not hesitate to ask things of God the Father in his Name. When we hold back asking things of God we are saying we really don't trust him. What Jesus asks of us is that we trust God our Father enough to ask him to provide the ordinary things we need to live...food, clothing, health, our homes. And he asks us to trust God to help us even when our daily routine gets disrupted and things are not going so well.

The world can be a scary place for people without hope. Jesus tells us not to give up hope...to be brave...because he has defeated the world. Let us ask God to help us be brave and help us to help others be brave too!

