

XXV TRINITY 2016

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

I St. JOHN 3.1 St MATTHEW 24.23



Signs of the times! Today is the 25th Sunday after Trinity...which tells us we are coming to the end of the Trinity Season and the Church Year.

A curious feature of the *Book of Common Prayer* is the numbering of the Sundays after Trinity...1 through 24. To find today's readings we go to the 6th Sunday after Epiphany.

The Epiphany Season is about the signs of the times...the many striking appearances Jesus makes...that offer proof he is exactly who he claims to be...God's son...who offers us forgiveness, hope and the possibility of everlasting life with him in heaven.

The Trinity Season is about our spiritual growth. The Celebrant wears green vestments at Mass...green is the color of Spring and a sign of growth and new life. During the Trinity Season we take what we have learned during the first half of the Church Year and start applying it to our lives...so we may become striking appearances to others for Jesus.

Today's readings provide the perfect segue between the Trinity Season and what's next...Advent and Christmas. John and Matthew both talk about signs of the times and appearances. Advent is about preparing for Jesus' first appearance at Christmas. It is no accident the hymns and readings during Advent also talk about his second coming.

Saint John knew Jesus personally. He is the author of the Fourth Gospel, three Letters and Revelation. We read the Last Gospel at the end of every Mass because it summarizes everything we believe about Jesus and his striking appearances...signs of the times.

John encourages us to live in fellowship with God and each other and avoid dissention within the Church. He is specifically concerned we not get duped by false teachers...those who say sin does not matter...those who teach showing love and compassion toward others is meaningless. Jesus was a real human being like us. All who

believe in Jesus and love God must also love one another.

John tells us God's love for us is so great we are called his children. That does not prevent us from doing hurtful things either to ourselves or to others. We have free will. But ignoring sin and its consequences goes against everything we believe. John wants us to always remember how we are supposed to conduct ourselves...not in an arrogant way or thinking we are above everyone else...but with love...so we are ready for Jesus when he returns.

Signs of the times! Jesus talks about his return in the Gospel. He gives us an explicit warning against following those who claim to have special knowledge about the end times because they see the "signs of the times" in world events or natural disasters. Jesus tells us we will always see those things and to not despair.

Some people will even say they are Jesus returned or his special agents and if we really want to be saved we should follow them. No good can come from listening to them. Jesus tells us not to concern ourselves with the how and the when of the end times...focus on what we have control over...this very moment.

Much bad teaching has developed about the end times and the Second Coming of Christ. Most of the bad teaching has to do with people who are looking for an angry vengeful God to come and wipe everything out and start over again. Nothing could be further from the truth about what we should expect when Jesus returns.

The Gospel is about the signs of the times when Jesus comes back. What should we expect...the striking appearance we talk about in the great Advent hymn, "Lo, he comes with clouds descending". Jesus will return with power and surrounded by bright white light...and lead all those who believe in him to where he is now.

Signs of the times! We don't have to fear them. Jesus tells us to be brave...he has defeated the world. That's all the hope we need.

