

## IV ADVENT 2016

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

#### FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

##### PHIL 4.4 ST JOHN 1.19



Let's revisit the Advent Collect...we are asking God to help us walk away from sin and darkness...walk toward forgiveness and the Light that is Jesus...words to commit to our hearts, minds and souls...words that lead us to taking action!

Our friends John the Baptist and Paul didn't just say words...they took action...and they encouraged others to do the same...turn away from sin and darkness and death...embrace the light and life that comes from knowing Jesus.

John the Baptist is the main character other than Jesus in today's Gospel just as he was in last week's. We learned last week John had gotten himself arrested for telling King Herod to clean up his act. Today's Gospel is more of a prequel...John is still busy preaching...he hasn't yet ended up in jail.

Some priests and Levites come to John and ask him the same question he would ask Jesus later..."Are you the one?" John did not refuse to answer and said he was not the Messiah. They ask John if he is Elijah...citing what the prophet Malachi wrote 500 years earlier...Elijah would come first to announce the Messiah's arrival. "No", John said, "I'm not him either."

The priests and Levites were persistent and demanded John explain why he was going around the country baptizing people with water if he wasn't the Messiah or Elijah or some other prophet.

Our friend John quotes the prophet Isaiah and answers,

- *"I am the voice of someone shouting in the desert: Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!"*

Make a straight path for the Lord to travel...is the Advent message...make a straight path for the Lord to travel...directly into our hearts, minds and souls...make some changes in our lives...take decisive action...embrace light and life...make a straight path for the Lord to travel...we start by living the Advent message.

John goes on to say even though he is baptizing people with water someone greater than he would soon come on the scene and John says he isn't good enough to even untie his shoes.

John would later baptize Jesus and point to him and call him the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...we remind ourselves of what John said about Jesus at every Mass in the words spoken by the priest just before we receive Holy Communion.

Our friend Saint Paul has something to tell us too...about getting ready for Jesus' Second Coming...he tells us to always be joyful in our union with the Lord...and to rejoice! He then gives us some practical advice:

- *Show a gentle attitude toward everyone;*
- *Know the Lord is coming soon;*
- *Don't worry about anything; ask God for what we need;*
- *God's peace is far beyond our understanding; it keeps our hearts and minds safe in union with Jesus Christ;*
- *Put into practice what we have learned.*

Throughout the Advent Season we have been listening to prophecies and singing hymns about the coming of Jesus and the message is always one of hope...Jesus is coming soon...things will get better. But Advent is more than just beautiful hymns and words...it's about having an ACTION PLAN...for doing what the Advent Collect says...walk away from sin and darkness...walk toward forgiveness and the Light that is Jesus.

Advent is about getting our house in order...about making a straight path for Jesus to travel directly into our hearts, minds and souls...now, not later...while we have time.

It's still not too late to implement an Advent Action Plan...and a clean house will give us a reason to truly rejoice at the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day.

