

II EPIPHANY 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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ROMANS 12.6 ST. MARK 1.1

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Show and tell...is a common classroom activity in pre-school and early elementary school. A child brings an item from home to show to others...and tells why the item is important to them. Show and tell is an important tool to give children confidence in public speaking. Some children like show and tell...others don't.

The Epiphany Season is all about showing and telling...God shows himself to us in his Son Jesus...and we go out and tell others. We get the tools we need to confidently tell others about Jesus at our baptisms. The news about Jesus is good...we don't want to keep it to ourselves.

John the Baptist is a key player in today's Gospel and in two of the Advent Gospels. He has a lot to say...he has a lot to show and tell about Jesus...and we need to listen...and we need to follow his example.

About 500 years before the birth of Jesus the prophet Malachi wrote God would send a messenger ahead of the Messiah so our hearts and minds and souls would be ready to welcome him.

John the Baptist is the public relations guy Malachi talked about who was sent to announce the Messiah's arrival. With the Baptism of Jesus, John the Baptist's role as the public relations guy for Jesus is complete. It is up to us to listen and respond to his message.

John the Baptist shows up as a wild-eyed itinerant preacher in the equivalent of torn jeans and weird tee shirts counseling to cease destruction – of self and others. He invited people to show they were serious about starting fresh by getting baptized with water.

But John said as good as his baptism was...it wasn't good enough to accomplish what was needed...the forgiveness of sins once and for all...and new life that was only possible with God's direct intervention into the lives of the people he created and loves. John said someone greater than he was coming who would baptize us with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus did not need to get baptized. He is made of the same stuff as the Father...God stuff...and is not capable of sin. So why did Jesus ask John to baptize him? Jesus was baptized for our benefit...not his! His baptism is an epiphany...a showing and telling of who he is...God's Son and a human being.

John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins, but there is no reason to believe John knew who Jesus was while they were growing up. John the Evangelist...not to be confused with John the Baptist...records John the Baptist's startling declaration about Jesus..."Look, there is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

John could not have figured out who Jesus was on his own...neither can we. When the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus, God calls him his only Son, whom he loves. We can only see Jesus for who he really is because we have been baptized with water and the Holy Spirit...we have been shown the truth about Jesus.

Our baptisms with water and the Holy Spirit make us epiphanies...showings and tellings...for Jesus. The Baptism of Jesus is the pattern for our own baptisms with water and the Holy Spirit. The life of Jesus, which was one of humility and service to others, is the pattern for our own lives.

Saint Paul gives us some good advice on being epiphanies for Jesus. Our love for each other must be sincere...not phony; hate what is evil...do not hate people; hold on to what is good; love each other without reservation; show respect for one another; work hard...don't be lazy; share what we have with others; be hospitable and kind to others.

Showing and telling...is what the Epiphany Season is all about. We get the tools we need to become epiphanies for Jesus when we are baptized. We have a choice of becoming good epiphanies that draw people to Jesus...or bad epiphanies that drive people away from Jesus.

The question we need to ask ourselves...what kind of epiphanies are we going to be...what are we going to show and tell others about Jesus?

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