

III LENT 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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EPHESIANS 5.1 ST. LUKE 11.14



A country torn apart by civil strife will not last very long...a family divided against itself falls apart...a parish full of anger and dissention will not survive. A house divided is not a house at all.

William Golding's dystopian novel *Lord of the Flies* published in 1954 concerns a group of British schoolboys marooned on a deserted island after their plane crashes. All of the adults on board the plane are killed.

Some of the boys are choir boys who seem to know each other...others are boys who do not seem to know each other...all are living in a Post-Apocalyptic world.

The boys attempt to organize a society with rules everyone is expected to follow. The goal is to provide peace and order while they wait and hope for rescue. The results are disastrous...the boys end up fighting with some of them getting killed...a house torn apart will not survive.

Lord of the Flies is the literal translation of *Beelzebub*...the name for a Philistine god we first read about in II Kings. Jews considered him the Chief Devil and the embodiment of everything that is evil and against God.

In the Gospel, Jesus is accused of being an agent for Beelzebub when he heals a man who was possessed by a demon and could not speak. Jesus responds by telling his critics what they are suggesting is ridiculous...a divided house will fall down. Satan wouldn't work against himself to make someone whole again...he likes to see people suffer. God does not!

The Gospel makes it very clear there is no such thing as a balance between good and evil in Christianity. Jesus did not come to level the playing field between God and the Devil. Satan has already lost the battle. He cannot force us into doing anything...but we can listen and choose to follow him.

Jesus says people who claim to be following him but their actions show they are working against him are ruining their lives and those

around them...embracing the darkness of Satan rather than the light that is Jesus.

Most of the world's religions understand the concepts of lightness and darkness as having something to do with good and evil. Our job according to many religions...other than Judaism and Christianity...is to try to maintain a balance between two.

God and Satan are not equals or opposites. Satan will never have the upper hand, and he knows it. He was created an angel to serve God and instead used his free will to work against God. We also have complete free will...it's up to us how we choose to use it.

Jesus tells another short story about a man who has cleaned his act up...gotten his house in order...then when he thinks nothing else needs to be done...ends up with a mess far worse than when he started. The point: Getting rid of the bad things that hold us back is not enough...they must be replaced by positive and dynamic good.

Saint Paul tells us to live like people who belong to the light...the Light that is Jesus. In Saint John's Gospel Jesus is called the Light of the World...a light so strong the Devil can never cause it to go out. We want to embrace that Light...and live it every day of our lives.

Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* is a disturbing read especially since the characters in the book are children. It shows what can happen to humanity when it embraces Beelzebub...the Lord of the Flies...living in darkness...in a world where compassion and love have no place.

The boys do eventually get rescued but they asked themselves what went wrong...they did everything adults do. Sometimes adults act no better than out of control children!

A country torn apart by civil strife will not last very long...a family divided against itself falls apart...a parish full of anger and dissention will not survive. A house divided is not a house at all.

Let us listen to our friend Saint Paul and live like people who belong to the light of Jesus, because his light brings a rich harvest of every kind of goodness, right behavior, and truth.

