

XI TRINITY 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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1 COR. 15.1 St. LUKE 18.9



It's all about our attitude...it reflects where our heart is...and our heart has to be all about LOVE.

Father Hudson Stuck, missionary priest and Archdeacon of the Yukon from 1904-1920, not only talked about Christian love...he practiced it...sometimes it was tough love in words and actions...a trait he shared with our friend Saint Paul.

On June 4, 1916 Father Stuck delivered the sermon to the graduating class of Columbia University in New York. He chose as the text for his sermon the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican...the Lawyer and the Tax Collector.

The graduating class was comprised primarily of men who were about to begin lives of service to others: teachers, social workers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, priests, maybe even tax collectors. Father Stuck told them their first commitment was to God and then to those they were supposed to be helping...they were not supposed to be serving themselves. Some didn't like what he said.

Father Stuck received a scathing dismissal of his sermon from the editor of the New York Times. On June 27, 1916 he wrote back in these compelling words...***before humanity can be helped, it must be understood, and before it can be understood, it must be loved.*** It's all about our attitude.

When we hear the Summary of the Law at the beginning of the Mass we get the love God part...it's the love others part that we sometimes try to excuse ourselves from doing. But our attitude toward others really shows our attitude toward God...it is not possible to love God and not love others. Maybe it's time to readjust our attitudes.

Let's update the story in today's Gospel a bit...let's say the lawyer and tax collector are members of the same parish. What brought them to the church in the first place? We should probably ask ourselves the same question...what brought us here today?

The lawyer has an inflated sense of self...he stands in front of the Altar and thinks he has to remind God of what a wonderful person he is...how much he has given the church...and how much better he is than the low-life tax collector standing in the back of the church.

The lawyer thinks his religion is about himself...and wants God to congratulate him for doing all of the things he is supposed to be doing. It's all about his attitude...it's wrong...and he leaves the church not being right with God.

The tax collector stands in the back of the church and can't even bring himself to look up at the Altar. He knows his religion is about God and all he can say is to ask God to forgive him. It's all about his attitude...he leaves the church right with God.

What brought the lawyer and tax collector to church? Both came to pray...God heard their prayers...but the lawyer needed to feel morally superior to the tax collector. The tax collector only knew he needed God's help and forgiveness.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is about our attitude toward God and others. Let's ask ourselves what brings us to Mass every week? Why are we here today? Do we think the Church is only about us? Do we feel a need to compare ourselves to others? Do we feel morally superior to others? Or do we know we need God's forgiveness to bring order to our lives? Do we love others?

Saint Paul tells us in the Epistle that what he has received he is passing on to us, to be believed and put into practice in our lives. He makes it clear the kind of smug self-righteous attitude the lawyer shows in putting down others because of who they are or who we think they are has no place in Church or in our lives.

It's in our commitment to helping others we learn to appreciate what Father Stuck wrote in his letter to the Editor...***before humanity can be helped, it must be understood, and before it can be understood, it must be loved.***

It's all about our attitude...it reflects where our heart is...and our heart has to be all about LOVE.

