

I LENT 2018

SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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HYMN 344 ST. MATTHEW 4.1

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Jesus said it was never about him...it was always about us...it was always about God's love for us!

Saint Paul writes in his Letter to the Ephesians...he wants us to have the power to understand, as all of God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, how deep...how all-encompassing is God's love for us!

Paul adds...God's love for us is so great it truly is beyond anything we can imagine...much less fully understand. God's love for us is so strong he sent his son Jesus to become a human being just like us...God walked among us...so we might one day walk with him in heaven. Jesus did this for us!

Jesus didn't need to get baptized. Even his cousin John said Jesus should baptize him instead. Jesus told John not to worry...go ahead and baptize him. Saint Matthew writes after Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove, and God called Jesus his dear Son...and we should listen to him. Jesus' baptism was a very human act of humility...it set the standard for our own baptism by Water and the Holy Spirit. Jesus did this for us!

Jesus allowed himself to be tested by Satan while he was praying in the desert...he was hungry. Jesus experienced every temptation we experience...another very human act of humility. Satan is the Great Deceiver and Trickster. He tried to trick God with his lies. Jesus didn't cave in. We learn from Jesus how not to fall prey to the Devil's lies and tricks. We learn how to tell Satan to go back to where he came from. We can do this only through discipline, fasting and prayer, just as Jesus did. Jesus did this for us!

Jesus prayed and taught his whole life. He didn't stop with praying and teaching. He put his words into action and always acted in the best interest of others. He healed people and restored them to life. He made families whole again. He gave them hope. Everything he said and all of the miracles and actions he did were never about him. He never sought fame and glory. Jesus did this for us!

Jesus had to die. The act of God dying...the Divine Reversal...makes sense only when we understand it's the ultimate act of God's love for us...his willingness to let Jesus die on the cross...the humiliating death of a common criminal. Through his death...the rift between God and humanity was closed...the sin that would have kept us from walking with God in heaven was forgiven. We couldn't do this for ourselves. Jesus did this for us!

Jesus rose from the dead on that first Easter morning. There was glad surprise when his friends saw him again. He continued to talk with them. When Jesus told them later he was leaving again and going away again...back to his Father in heaven...he told them not to be sad. He was doing this for them...and for all of humanity. And when he took his rightful place in heaven...he would send the Holy Spirit...who would give them all the guidance and strength and support they needed to continue on...and turn their sadness into happiness. Jesus did this for us!

Jesus tells us in Matthew's Gospel he is with us always until the end of time. We began our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday...we asked God to make our hearts pure and clean and put a new and loyal spirit in us. Lent is supposed to be our time in the desert. Along the way...we might get tested. We need to remind ourselves Jesus went through every test that comes our way...so we don't give up. Jesus did this for us!

Jesus' death is indeed the ultimate proof of God's love for us...and yes God's love is so great we cannot fully understand it during this lifetime. But we do experience God's love every day of our lives, in church, at work, in school, at home, in the people we meet. We get help from the Holy Spirit to continue our work...he gives us the guidance and strength and support we need so we don't become discouraged. Jesus did this for us!

Everything Jesus said, everything he taught, every action he took, every healing, every moment of his life, was never about him. Everything Jesus did was for us! Everything Jesus does now...is for us!

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