

III EASTER 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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1 St PETER 2.11 St. JOHN 16.16



“Now it’s time to say good-bye”...began the closing theme song for those of us “young” enough to remember the original Mickey Mouse Club. For one eight year old boy I knew well, this was a sad time...but he believed what Mickey also said...**“See you real soon. Why? Because we like you!”**

While there’s no direct connection between the Mickey Mouse Club and the Gospels...children learned a valuable life lesson from Mickey and from other children’s programs like the Friendly Giant and Mister Rogers Neighborhood. They learned they were loved, their TV friends were going away for a while, but they would be back.

When we were children we also learned to trust God to watch over us while we slept at night. And we knew our parents were there when we went to bed and they would be there when we woke up in the morning. All was well in our little world and we were happy.

Beginning today and continuing through Pentecost the tone of the Gospel readings changes. We might be wondering where Easter went...after all we’re still in the Easter Season. Today and for the next several weeks we go back to Maundy Thursday and what is sometimes called the Farewell Discourse of our Lord from Saint John’s Gospel. In common speak...Jesus is saying goodbye to his friends...trying to get them ready for Good Friday. He also tells them they will see him again...in a little while.

The disciples didn’t understand what Jesus meant when he told them he was going away for a little while and during the time he was away they wouldn’t see him. They didn’t understand him when he said they would see him again for a little while...and then he would be going away for good back to his Father.

Jesus knew what he was saying was hard for his friends to hear. He tells a story his leaving was going to be like a mother giving birth...at first it would be painful and hard to bear...but then things would get better...and all the pain would be forgotten...because her baby had been born. They would be happy he was going away...not sad.

The first little while Jesus is talking about is the Crucifixion. He tells his friends the world would be happy and think it had gotten rid of him once and for all. Then there would be a surprise re-appearance after the Resurrection...and his friends would happy again. Then he would be going away again...for a little while. They should rejoice and be happy he was going away.

The second little while Jesus is talking about is the Ascension. Jesus promised his friends he would send a Helper who would give them strength and perseverance after he went back to his Father. They didn’t understand what he meant...but they would understand once they were filled with the Spirit on Pentecost and their eyes opened to the truth about what he said. What was it Jesus said to his friends? He told them he would be back...because he loves them.

We have been in a two thousand year “little while” period of waiting for Jesus to return. We would all like that to happen sooner rather than later. Because we have the Helper Jesus promised would guide us and give us strength to continue while we wait for his return...we don’t have to be sad either. Instead...we rejoice...because he hasn’t left us alone. He will be there to welcome us into his Father’s house according to God’s timetable...not ours.

We don’t know when Jesus will return and we waste our time trying to figure out the exact time and minute and second of his return. If we really trust God we will be patient. What we can do is make the best use of this “little while” time of waiting by paying attention to what Saint Peter tells us we should be doing...God’s will...by loving each other and by doing good works...and by not using the freedom God gives us in the wrong way. We should not...as Peter says...use our freedom to cover up bad works.

Our little while of waiting should be a dynamic and active time of spreading the Good News about Jesus and the joy that comes from knowing him and his promise of eternal life...and Jesus always keeps his promises. And Jesus promised he would never leave us alone to try to figure things out on our own.

After the forty days of Lent and the sadness of Good Friday we don’t want to let go of the happiness we experienced on Easter Day. We want Easter to last forever...and it will...but not during this “little while” of waiting for Jesus to return.

Jesus said his final good-byes to his friends just before the Ascension. That was also the time he said good-bye to us...but only for a little while. We will see him again...and when we do...our hearts will be filled with joy and gladness...the kind of joy and gladness no one will ever be able to take away from us.

In the meantime...we have work to do...and have all the help we need to accomplish our work...so let’s get busy.

