

V EPIPHANY 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

COL. 3.12-17 ST. MATT. 13.24-30

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Our Epiphany Season has been long this year. But as the old saying goes...“All good things must come to an end.” Really? If Epiphany teaches us only one thing...it teaches us to believe in Jesus’ promise...“better things are yet to come.”

On this Fifth and final Sunday after the Epiphany...we say good-bye to two old friends...the *Alleluia* and the *Gloria in excelsis*. Our Liturgy takes on a more penitential tone as we prepare ourselves for the pre-Lenten and Lenten seasons.

The vestments worn by the priest and the High Altar hangings will soon change to violet...and flowers will be absent from the Altar. It’s time for introspection...it’s time to get rid of old patterns of behavior...it’s time to take on Christ-like behavior.

Our friend Paul is best known for his tough-love approach to getting people to change their behavior for the better. We see a more gentle side of Paul in his Letter to the Colossians. Paul writes to correct some errors in teaching by some of the members of the Colossian Church. He tells them they shouldn’t try to impress people with strict ceremonies or rituals. Instead, the One they should try to impress is God himself...by acting toward others in the way Jesus acts toward us...by showing unconditional love.

Paul reminds us we are God’s people and to act accordingly. He encourages us to show compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. We should be tolerant toward one another and forgive one another whenever we have a complaint against someone else. We must love each other perfectly. What about those in the church who resist God’s love?

In some of the most beautiful prose Holy Scripture has to offer...Paul tells us the peace Christ gives us binds us together as the Body of Christ and guides us in making decisions. Listen to Paul’s words of strength and encouragement:

“Christ’s message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one

another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.”

We should all be doing what Paul says. Sometimes our egos and self-interests get in the way...we become like the guy who sabotaged the farmer’s wheat crop in today’s Gospel...we can stifle the Church’s mission and growth...and risk losing our own reward in heaven. Time to make changes so we grow up healthy and strong with the rest of the wheat.

The Gospel is a short story about heaven and our response to the actions of others in the church we may find objectionable. When the farmer discovers his wheat crop has been sabotaged his workers want to pull up the weeds. But the farmer doesn’t want to risk losing any of his wheat. He tells his workers to let everything grow and they’ll sort things out in the end.

The Church is like the wheat and weeds growing together...it’s a mixed bag of people. We’re called to live in peace and love...what do we do when things don’t go that way? What do we do when we see someone misbehaving? We are to act with patience and show compassion...we try to correct their behavior...out of love.

When confronted with situations like this we are to teach and instruct...we don’t want to do anything that would make matters worse. We are ultimately about forgiveness and reconciliation. We don’t want to risk losing them or others because we have been too hasty or judgmental in word or action.

Today’s Epistle and Gospel direct our attention toward the final epiphany...the final striking appearance...Jesus will make on the last day. Then we will sing alleluias in an unending Easter of joy.

What about the wheat and the weeds...what about us the mixed bag called the Church? Ask for God’s guidance...pray for peace in the Church and the World. That’s our Mission. And know God will sort things out in the end.

Better things are yet to come!

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