

II LENT 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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1 THESS. 4.1-8 St. MATT. 15.21-28



Dear God...we can't do it on our own...we need your help to keep our bodies, minds and souls healthy and strong...we need your help to keep us from thinking or acting in ways that might hurt ourselves...or others.

In the Collect for the Second Sunday in Lent we admit to God we sometimes create messes in our lives...and often can't put things back in order by ourselves...we need his help!

Saint Paul was a proponent of healthy living...in mind, body and soul. He believed our physical and spiritual lives couldn't be separated. If we eat healthier foods and exercise regularly we feel better. Our bodies are gifts from God, and he wants us to treat them properly. The same holds true of our spiritual disciplines.

Paul speaks with Apostolic Authority. We need to pay attention to what he writes in this morning's Epistle to the Thessalonians. He wants us to live in order to please God:

- We are to recognize sex is a gift from God and not to engage in any sexual activity that is improper or immoral,
- Marriage is a holy and honorable estate in which the husband and wife do what's best for each other,
- We are not to get carried away by lustful desire...in anything we do...not just in matters sexual,
- We are not to defraud anyone...in any way...we are not to take unfair advantage of anyone.

Paul adds a warning...whoever rejects this teaching rejects God and dishonors the Holy Spirit within us.

Paul spends a lot of time talking about the body. The real body he is concerned about is the church. It's true we can cause emotional and physical distress when we don't take care of our own bodies. We're members of the Body of Christ...the Church. God wants what's best for us; we should want what's best for others. That is what is called Christian LOVE.

The greatest Adversary to keeping our minds, bodies and souls in order is the Devil himself...and not only in matters of proper sexual relations. The Devil loves to mess with our minds...he loves to try to interject himself into every aspect of our lives...and cause us grief. We learned last week to tell the Devil to get lost when he starts messing with us.

In the Gospel a Canaanite woman...a Gentile...comes to Jesus for help...her daughter has a demon and is in a bad way. We don't know anything more about the girl's condition other than it was serious and affecting her life and the lives of those around her.

Jesus uncharacteristically ignores the mother's cries for help...she makes so much noise his disciples ask him to send her away. She isn't dissuaded by the disciples' lack of compassion. She isn't even put off when Jesus says his mission is to his own people and it's not right to throw the children's food to dogs.

Gentiles were often referred to as dogs. Our mother isn't put off by Jesus' apparent dismissiveness...she is determined and persistent and looks directly at Jesus and tells him even dogs get to eat table scraps. It was the perfect come back. Jesus sent her home with comforting words her daughter had completely recovered.

If we believe God wants what is best for us...that he wants our minds, bodies and souls to be completely healthy...then we must show the same kind of faith the mother in today's Gospel showed. She came to Jesus for help. Her daughter was sick, and she believed Jesus could heal her.

We sometimes get frustrated when we don't get an immediate answer to our prayers for healing. Like the mother in the Gospel...we have to be persistent. God always answers our prayers...yes, no, or wait a while. Sometimes we may have to wait quite a while for answer.

Both the Epistle and Gospel have to do with physical and spiritual health. Lent is a good time for us to ask God to help us see both are connected...and to help us keep both strong and healthy.

