

V LENT 2019 (PASSION SUNDAY)

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

HEBREWS 9.11-15 ST. JOHN 8.46-59



Jesus goes into hiding. Jesus doesn't hide from people...but today he does. Why? Because Jesus claimed the Name reserved only for God...I AM. And so the people picked up stones to throw at him...it was time for Jesus to go into hiding...there was still work to do.

We are now heading into the final two weeks of Lent, which we call Passiontide. "Passion" means "endurance" and "suffering". We know it's Passiontide because the crucifixes, icons and statues are veiled in purple...a visual reminder of the Gospel account of Jesus hiding himself. It wasn't yet time for Jesus to reveal his glory...it stays hidden for a while longer.

Our attention these last two weeks of Lent is on Jesus' endurance and suffering. We have tried to endure and suffer with Jesus too. We should not think of our endurance or suffering as negative things...we should consider them character building. Whatever our Lenten disciplines are...whether it's giving up chocolate cake or making time during our busy day for additional prayer and reflection...they are meant to focus our on Jesus and his own Passiontide.

When Jesus told his followers he was going to have to go to Jerusalem, where he would be arrested, put on trial, and killed, they didn't want to hear it. Neither do we. Jesus said Abraham and the prophets would rejoice at the prospect of a permanent fix to a broken relationship with God. We should rejoice too. Why?

The Letter to the Hebrews talks about the sacrifices that took place in the Temple in Jerusalem. They were intended to forgive sins...to repair the broken relationship between God and man...but the fix wasn't permanent...it was temporary...to be repeated every year.

Hebrews identifies Jesus as the Great High Priest...who is priest, sacrifice and God. By offering himself up to God, Jesus made a new covenant, or agreement with God, and our sins were forgiven forever. Jesus' sacrifice doesn't have to be repeated...in fact it can't be repeated...it is the permanent fix done once for all mankind.

Jesus tried to explain to the lawyers in today's Gospel the reason he came was to make the promise of forgiveness and everlasting life God made to Abraham and the prophets come true. He didn't come to dishonor Abraham or the prophets but by their failure to see him for who is...they not only dishonor their ancestors but God himself. And what Jesus does is for us...not for himself.

Our Lenten journey continues and it will become more focused and more intense. We will be thinking more about what Jesus is getting ready to do for us on Good Friday. Jesus too is preparing to complete his mission. His own Lenten journey to the cross and its promise of eternal life with him in heaven is the ultimate example of endurance and suffering.

We read in today's Epistle "those who have been called by God may receive the eternal blessings God has promised." The word "Church" means "those who have been called". We have been called into a special relationship with God through his Son, Jesus Christ. The reality of what that means will be made clear in the Church's liturgies over the next two weeks.

Jesus promises us eternal life. His promise makes Passiontide a time we should happily embrace...and it makes whatever suffering and endurance we have during this lifetime easier.

We must always remember everything Jesus did was for us. We should be willing to make this journey for him.

