

IV Easter 2020
Sermon-Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. James 1.17-21 St. John 16.5-15



God gives us good gifts and perfect presents. He doesn't give us bad gifts or imperfect presents...that would be against his nature.

In the Epistle, Saint James reminds us everything we have comes from God. He calls God the Father of lights who doesn't change his mind and cause darkness. He gives us his "word of truth" that helps us pattern our daily lives.

We might not consider sheltering-in-place a gift from God. We would rather be about our daily routine without any restrictions on our movement or the need to wear facemasks to keep our selves and others safe. We can, however, use this time to get closer to God...through prayer. We can ask him how we should be using our time.

Today's Epistle is the first half of the Epistle reading for Thanksgiving Day. The theme is "hearing God's word". The "word" James is talking about is Holy Scripture...the Bible. We hear God's word at every Mass and in the daily offices. We don't have to wait to come to church to hear God's word...we can read it for ourselves at home.

James tells us it is not enough to hear God's word; we have to be prepared to put it into action. Our faith is increased every time we read and hear God's word. Our faith is dynamic...we must put it into practice in everything we say and do.

Next week we will hear the second half of the Thanksgiving Epistle. The readings make more sense when they are read together. This week we talk about hearing God's word; next week we talk more about our acting upon God's word and the good works our actions must produce.

James tells us we have the "word of truth" planted in our hearts...."planted" in the sense of grafting from one plant to another...so they can continue to grow healthy and strong. The Holy Spirit gets "planted" in our hearts when we are baptized. He changes us from the inside out. When we open up our hearts to the Holy Spirit, he goes to work to help us put our Faith into practice.

James gives us some practical advice we should follow: We should be good listeners; we should think before we speak; we should not get angry easily; we should avoid bad habits that lead us to sin and keep us from doing good works. It's God's word, which we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to put into action that helps us follow James advice.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples he is getting ready to leave them. He tells them this at the Last Supper. The disciples were upset by what Jesus was saying. He tells them to calm down, because it is the right thing for him to do. When he goes away he will send the Comforter, who will make everything clear to them.

The word "Comforter" is another word for the Holy Spirit and means "Helper"...and the "One who gives us strength". Jesus said the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth and make everything clear to us. He will help us say and do the right things. He will enable us when we hear God's word, to understand what it means, and then put our Faith into practice every day of our lives.

Let's ask ourselves what good gifts and perfect presents God has given us today. Let's ask ourselves what we're going to do with those good gifts and perfect presents. Even now we can and should take action...we may be sheltered-in-place...our faith isn't.

