

Thanksgiving Day 2020
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. James 1.16 St. Matthew 6.25



Every good gift and every perfect present comes down from heaven...it comes down from God the Creator of the heavenly lights, who does not change or cause darkness by turning.

God only knows how to give good gifts and perfect presents...he is incapable of giving bad gifts and imperfect presents...that simply is not in his nature.

Saint James tells us we should always be giving thanks to God for the many blessings he has given us...it is appropriate we set time aside every day to give him thanks...not just on Thanksgiving Day.

James also makes a distinction between being tested and tempted. All of us get tested in different ways. The global pandemic has tested our ability to survive sheltering in place, restrictions on work and gathering for Mass. When we pass such tests...James tells us...God blesses us more and more...and our characters become stronger and enable us to withstand future tests.

God allows us to be tested but he does not tempt us...we give into our own temptations...whatever they are...and turn away from God...blaming him for the messes we have created ourselves. James reminds us when temptations come our way...we have the good gifts and perfect presents of God's truth and love to help us avoid giving into them.

The global pandemic means this Thanksgiving will be very different for many people, especially those of us who are choosing not to travel and will miss seeing our family and friends. Some churches are still unable to meet even for outside services. Throughout all of these tests...we must not forget the basic message of Thanksgiving...we thank God for his many blessings...which we are receiving even in these trying times.

James also tells us it is not enough to hear the Good News about Jesus...we must be willing to put that belief into practice. God's love is an action...our love must also be an action that produces good results.

What James calls true and genuine religion has two components in God's eyes...reaching out to anyone who needs our help...and not giving into the various temptations we're likely to encounter.

Jesus tells us not to worry about where our food and clothing are coming from; God knows what we need even before we ask. But what about the person who has just lost his job and truly doesn't know where his next meal will be coming from? What about those who have been made homeless by the pandemic?

It's hard for others to take us seriously if we tell them to trust God, when we don't try to help them with their basic needs. It's hard for them not to worry about where their next meal will come from or how they will buy clothes for their children. We can and must do what we can to alleviate their suffering...to lessen their worry. Actions...do speak louder than words!

The global pandemic has created a lot of challenges...it has not kept us from experiencing God's love...it has not diminished our hope...it has not stopped us from giving thanks to God for the good gifts and perfect presents...like our families and friends...and the wisdom and science...to those who are working to find an effective vaccine.

Let's ask ourselves what Thanksgiving Day is really all about. What does Thanksgiving mean to us...how can we let the Good News we heard today...change our hearts?

We're about to begin a new Church Year. The Thanksgiving Day lessons and hymns transition us to Advent Sunday...and our preparation for Jesus First Coming at Christmas and his Second Coming at the end of time.

In the great Thanksgiving Day hymn *Come, ye thankful people come* we ask Jesus to hurry up and come back and take his final harvest home...safely gathered and forever free from sorrow and sin and global pandemics.

We are that harvest. Happy Thanksgiving!

