

Thanksgiving Day 2021
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

St. James 1.16-27 St. Matthew 6.25-34



Good gifts and perfect presents comes down from heaven...from God our Father who made the stars in the sky... and he is the One who never changes. In fact, God never gives bad gifts and imperfect presents...it's against his very nature.

The lessons appointed for Thanksgiving Day teach us two basic truths about Christianity: everything we have comes from God and we have a duty to share what we have with those less fortunate; and we shouldn't spend so much time worrying about material things...God knows what we need.

Thanksgiving Day is certainly about thanking God for the many blessings he has given us: the food on our tables; our families and friends; our Parish Church; our health; our work; and all of the other good gifts and perfects presents he has given us. Thanking God for these things is something we should be doing every day...not just on Thanksgiving Day.

In the Epistle, Saint James tells us it is not enough to just acknowledge God is the source of everything we have...we have to act like his children whose lives have been changed for the better...we have to behave like his children...we have to do more than give God lip service.

In the Epistle, James tells us to listen carefully to what he is teaching us. Think first...don't be so quick to say something. Don't get angry so easily...it won't lead to anything good. Get rid of nasty habits and bad behavior. Conduct our selves as God's children who have had his Word planted in our hearts.

It is acting on God's Word...the Good News about Jesus...that leads us to do what James calls true and genuine religion and what God is looking for in each of us...the kind of unconditional love and compassion toward those in need that comes from the heart...the kind of unconditional love Jesus shows...the kind of love that compels us to take action.

The Gospel comes from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tells us we should not worry about where our food and clothing will come from. God knows what material things we

need to survive and he will provide what is best for us. Spending too much time worrying about things, especially what might happen tomorrow or next week or next year, can actually shorten our lives. We should focus on today's challenges; tomorrow's challenges will take care of themselves.

What Jesus wants from us is for us to trust God our Father...God our Papa...to take care of our material needs in the way that will benefit us the most. If we spend less time worrying about such things, we can spend more time seeing how much God loves us and then we can respond to his love by loving others and learning what he wants us to do with our lives.

The Thanksgiving Day lessons also teach us God is ultimately in charge. Everything we have comes from him and he wants us to have those things that will help us grow in our relationship with him.

Rogation Sunday and Thanksgiving Day share common agricultural theme of planting seeds, watching them grow, and harvesting healthy crops. Thanksgiving Day is ultimately about us. We have the seed (the Holy Spirit) planted in us at baptism that helps us grow into God's children...and we are the crop that will get harvested at the end of time.

Thanksgiving Day is the good and perfect introduction to the Advent Season, when we prepare ourselves for the First Coming of Jesus on Christmas Day, and look forward to his Second Coming on the last day.

Until then we are about to experience a taste of heaven on earth in the Holy Eucharist. *Eucharist* means *thanksgiving*...it is our Great Thanksgiving for that most perfect of God's gift...the Body and Blood of his Son, Jesus, in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Let's use the good gifts and perfect presents God has given us wisely, and pray for the final harvest where we will be safely gathered in, freed from sorrow, freed from sin, forever in God's presence.

Happy Thanksgiving!

