

X Trinity 2021

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*1 Cor. 12.1 St. Luke 19.41*



*Go tell it on the Mountain...* is an African-American spiritual song dating back to at least 1865. It is considered a Christmas Carol since the original lyrics celebrate the Nativity of Jesus...

*...Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

An alternate version of the hymn omits the reference to the birth of Jesus, instead declaring that, "Jesus Christ is Lord". In 1963, the musical team Peter, Paul and Mary adapted and rewrote part of the song referring to the civil rights movement of the early 1960s.

Mountains and hills are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on a mountain. The chariot swung low and scooped Elijah up from the top of a mountain and carried him away. The Jerusalem Temple was built on a mountain.

Jesus began his public ministry after his baptism and a period of solitude and reflection in the mountains. Perhaps the most significant mountain scene in the New Testament is the event we celebrated last Friday...the Transfiguration of Jesus.

At the Transfiguration, Jesus appears with Moses and Elijah...it is the moment when Peter, James and John encountered God through Jesus...who fulfills the Law and the Prophets. Jesus' public ministry concludes with the Transfiguration. He must now focus on completing his mission on Earth.

In this morning's Gospel we find Jesus and his disciples on a hillside overlooking Jerusalem. It's the first Palm Sunday and shortly before Jesus begins his procession into the city riding on a donkey. He was probably able to see the Temple...God's house...which he loved so much and where it taught. He weeps... not small tears...visceral tears...not for the city...but for the people who failed to see him for who he really is...for their missed opportunities...

*...“If you only knew today what is needed for peace...But now you cannot see it...not a single stone will they leave in its place, because you did not recognize the time God came to save you”!*

800 years before Jesus, the Prophet Isaiah wrote,

*...“These faithful foreigners will I bring to my Holy Mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”*

When Jesus and the disciples got to the Holy Mountain and God's House...they found vendors exchanging currency and charging exorbitant fees and selling animals at inflated prices. Jesus threw the vendors out for ripping their own people off with dishonest and fraudulent business practices. Jesus quoted Jeremiah and said to them...

*...“Do you think my Temple is a hiding place for robbers?”*

It's interesting and appropriate *the Book of Common Prayer* appoints Saint Matthew's account of this event for the Dedication of a Church and Saint John's account for the Consecration of a Church. Father Massey Shepherd, author of the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, writes...

*...“Our Lord's cleansing of the Temple by vigorously driving out all traffickers in merchandise was not intended to be a judgment upon the use of God's house for activities other than worship, but a denunciation of a profane use of what has been dedicated to God, for purposes of selfish, material gain, rather than for the advancements of God's glory and kingdom.”*

In practical terms that means it's OK for parish churches to derive income from secular yoga classes, computer labs and pre-schools, as long as the relationship between all parties is fair and above board.

Let's pray Saint Joseph Parish may always be the spiritual "mountain" where we tell the story about Jesus...at Christmas, Easter, the long Season of Trinity...and always!

