

XIX Trinity 2021

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*Ephesians 4.17-32 St. Matthew 9.1-8*



In his commentary on today's Gospel in the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, Father Massey Shepherd writes...

*"Today we know physical health and spiritual health are intimately bound together, and that there is often nothing more healing in its power than the relief and the release that come from a consciousness and acceptance of God's forgiveness."*

The Church is all about forgiveness. Jesus commissioned the Apostles with the power to forgive sins in his Name. This power has been passed down through the Apostolic Succession to the bishops and priests of the Church. It is a duty every bishop and priest must faithfully discharge with love and compassion.

Jesus is all about forgiveness and repairing and rebuilding lives. In the Gospel, some people brought a paralyzed man on a cot. The Gospel doesn't record Jesus being asked to heal the man. But Jesus, moved by their faith, tells the paralyzed man to be courageous, and then tells the man his sins are forgiven.

Pope Saint John Paul II often told gatherings of young people to be courageous and trust in God even when facing adversity.

The healing of the paralyzed man is the one instance in the Gospels where Jesus claims what every Jew believed belonged to God and God alone...the power to forgive sins. The teachers of the Law considered Jesus' claim blasphemy. To back up his claim, Jesus points to his power to heal.

Jews believed all illness was a punishment for sin. When someone was cured...sin's power over that person was broken. Only a priest in the Temple could pronounce a person whole again. What Jesus does in today's Gospel is heal the paralyzed man by making him both spiritually and physically whole.

The Epistle is also about forgiveness...and anger management. Paul says we should strive for the ideals of Christian behavior...

*...our hearts and minds must be made completely new*

*...we must not lie*

*... we must always tell the truth*

*...we must control our anger and never give the Devil a chance*

*...we must never resort to robbing and must earn an honest wage*

*...we must help the poor*

*...we must not say hurtful things*

*...instead, the things we say must be good and build up the Church*

*...we must never give God's Holy Spirit a reason to be sad*

Paul concludes his lesson in anger management by telling us we should be kind and tender hearted to one another...we should forgive one another...as God has forgiven us through Christ.

Paul says the Church is like a body...the Body of Christ...whose parts must work together to build itself up through love. Failure to do so...as Saint Paul poignantly puts it...makes God's Holy Spirit sad. What he is saying is we must do everything within our power to get along and not sew seeds of dissention.

Paul reminds us in the words we hear in the Church's Baptismal and Confirmation Liturgies...Our hearts and minds must be made completely new, and we must put on our new selves, and live our lives accordingly.

Anger is an illness and like physical and other illnesses is a symptom of the overall condition called sin. Specific illnesses such as man's paralysis in the Gospel...are not God's punishment for specific sins. God takes no pleasure in seeing his children suffer. He wants us to have wholeness.

When we ask God to heal us...we're asking him to heal our whole being...mind, body and soul. Spiritual and physical healing go hand in hand...Jesus has the power to forgive and heal...and the Church pronounces the same in his Name.

Saint Paul gives us some good advice on how to reorient our lives and focus them on the freedom God has give us to love and forgive...and to have courage.

