

IV Easter 2022
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. James 1.17-21 St. John 16.5-15



Does God tempt us? Saint James answers that question with an emphatic...no! God cannot be tempted to do evil...and he doesn't tempt anyone. But God does allow us to be tested...but not beyond our ability to withstand and pass the test.

In the Epistle, James writes...*"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."*

Good gifts and perfect presents are God's specialty. He gives them to us freely and out of his unconditional love for us. He is incapable of giving us bad gifts or imperfect presents...any more than he is capable of causing us to do evil.

His good gifts and perfect presents benefit us when we open them up and put them to good use. It's our job as responsible, mature, Christians, to try to recognize the good gifts and perfect presents he gives us, and then proceed to use them wisely.

In telling us God is the Creator of heavenly lights and does not change or cause darkness by turning...James is reminding us God does not act against his nature. He sent his Son, Jesus, the Light of the world...to lead us out of sin and darkness and into light and life. Like his Father, Jesus does not act against his nature or in any way that would harm us.

Our Epistle readings for this week and next week are about hearing and doing God's word. The two lessons are read as one Epistle on Thanksgiving Day...and they make more sense when read together...since hearing God's word and acting upon it are inextricably connected.

James is intense in his conviction and teaching that it is not enough for us to say we love God and have Faith in Jesus Christ. We must be willing to put our Faith into practice. We must show love. Our Faith and Love for God are dynamic and living things that must go beyond lip service...they must become our good gifts and perfect presents for others.

James would later write a Faith that is not acted upon is like a cold, dead, corpse...lifeless...without any breath. Faith is not only about reading the words of the Bible and listening to the lessons we hear read at Mass. It's about taking what we read and hear and translating it into good and positive actions of love in thought, word and deed.

James gives us some practical advice on how we who possess God's good gifts and perfect presents should act. He tells us to be "quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry". That means we should think before saying anything we might regret having said later. We want to always say and do the right things. Unchecked anger makes that impossible and can lead to outright hatred.

The good thing is we don't have to rely on ourselves to take the good gifts and perfect presents God gives us and put them to use...in fact we can't do this on our own. We need help! Jesus promised his disciples when he went back to heaven he would not leave them alone...and he hasn't left us alone either.

Jesus promised us in the Gospel he would send the Comforter...the Holy Helper...who would lead us into all truth and make everything clear to us. He will help us to say and do the right things. He will enable us as the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent tells us, to "hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" the words of Scripture...and turn those words into right actions. .

James tells us to submit to God. He does not mean blind submission! He means that when we accept the word of truth planted in our hearts...we become active participants in God's plan for salvation and our Faith grows and remains vibrant and alive.

We already have the Holy Spirit...the Holy Helper...in us. Let us ask God to increase him in our lives so we may see the good gifts and perfect presents he has given us for what they truly are and then to use them wisely.

And let us remember every good gift and perfect present comed down from God the Creator of the heavenly lights.

