

IV Easter 2023

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*St. James 1.17-21 St. John 16.5-15*



God gives us good gifts and perfect presents...James tells us. He created the heavenly lights (the stars and planets) and everything else. And God is not like shifting shadows that change...people change...God never changes. In the hymn we sang at the beginning of today's Mass, he was, and is, the same, now and forever.

Our parents and friends give us gifts and presents because they want us to have them. They do this because they love us. We give them gifts and presents because we love them. We should not attach conditions to the gifts and presents we give to others. The giving...is both the gift and the reward. And we should always thank people who give us gifts and presents.

God does not give bad gifts or imperfect presents...that is against his nature...he always wants what is best for us. God gives us what we need freely and out of his unconditional love for us. He gives us many gifts and presents...food, clothes, money, our homes, our family and friends, our parish, our life! We sometimes take what God gives us for granted. We should not. He is the source of everything we have...we should always give him our thanks and praise.

The Epistle readings for this week and next week are from James and have to do with the gift of Faith. Faith, simply stated, is belief and trust in God, and in the teachings of the Church. Faith does not require proof. Faith is a free gift from God...we can't earn it...we can't buy it...God wants us to have it. And we believe God will carry through in the promises he gave us through Jesus.

Our response to God's free gift of faith is to do more than just talk about it. James tells us in the Epistle our faith must be active, dynamic and reaching out to others. This is James' way of saying it's not enough to talk the talk...we have to walk the walk. More about what James has to say about faith in action next week.

Weather is also a gift from God. Next Sunday...Rogation Sunday...we will ask God to bless the seeds and saplings planted by the

pre-school in our Saint Francis Garden. We will ask God to send the right amount of sun and rain...to keep his gift of Planet Earth healthy...and to make us good stewards of the gifts he has given us.

James tells us we have the "word of truth" planted in our hearts. We learn from reading the Bible God's plan to save mankind through the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus. God did have to save us...he wanted to save us because he loves us and we could not accomplish reconciliation with him on our own. Our redemption is God's best gift and most perfect present.

We show our thanks to God for his many good gifts and perfect presents by using them wisely. We are always to act like people who possess God's good gifts and perfect presents. We should be eager to listen to what someone says. We should choose how we respond carefully. We should not get angry easily. God wants what is best for us. We should want what is best for others.

Out of control anger can lead to hatred. Hatred of others can take over our lives. James is telling us we should think before saying something to someone we might later regret. Our words can build up...they can also tear down. We are the community of believers called Church. It's our mission to build up the Church and spread God's love to others.

James encourages us to always try to avoid attitudes and behaviors that are unhealthy and self-destructive and lead us away from what God. What God wants is for us to enjoy the good gifts and perfect presents he sends our way. We need help to do this. Jesus promised us he would send us the Holy Helper. And we know God always keeps his promises.

Finally, James tells us to submit to God. He means when we accept the "word of truth" planted in our hearts we become active participants in God's plan for salvation. Our faith becomes a living faith that sustains us.

God gives us good gifts and perfect presents. Let's thank him and ask him to energize our hearts with the power of the Holy Spirit to help us use his gifts wisely.

