

VIII Trinity 2020

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 8.12-17 St. Matt. 7.15-21



Grace...we learned from our friend Saint Paul last week...is God's free gift of love. We can't earn it...we can't buy it...it's free!

God's Grace sets us free from the bonds of sin and we become "slaves" to God. But as Father Massey Shepherd writes in The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary...

*...“The exchange from the bondage of sin to the slavery of God means a great deal more than a mere exchange of masters. In the new relationship we are more than slaves; we are sons and heirs of one whom we can legitimately call Father, by the gift of the Spirit wherewith our new Master has endowed us.”*

In today's Epistle reading Saint Paul says we get to call God...*Abba*...the Aramaic term for *Father*. *Abba* is a much more personal way of addressing God...not so much the formal *Father*...more like *Papa* or *Daddy*. We get to call God...*Papa*...or *Daddy*...because we are his adopted children...through Jesus. And we do so with the greatest of love and honor...just as Jesus does.

Saint Paul talks about all Christians being God's adopted children in his letters to the Galatians and Ephesians regardless of our backgrounds. All of us have favorite passages from Scripture. As an adopted child...these passages have a special meaning for me. My adoptive parents loved me enough to adopt me. They gave me a home and the chance to love them back.

We're God's adopted children and we will receive God's blessings now. Some of us may also suffer for Jesus during this lifetime just as he suffered for us. Afterward...we get to share in the glory (the light) of eternal life with him...the inheritance God has promised.

God's adopted children are held to a standard of behavior that should be reflected in how we live our lives. We want to be known by the work we do...which must always show our love for God and mankind. We must also watch out for those who might deceive us...maybe even cause us to hurt others. We can only do this by relying on God's Grace to guide us and protect us.

Jesus makes this clear in the Gospel we are to be on our guard against false prophets; they look like sheep on the outside...inside they are really like wild wolves...not just wild wolves...ravening wolves...looking for anyone they can devour. Wild and ferocious animals are hunters. They act only to satisfy their need for food. They often don't discriminate in their prey.

We can take what Jesus says about wild wolves as one of his harshest warnings. We are not to be fooled by those within the Church who look good and say all the right things...but do the exact opposite of what they say we should be doing. Father Shepherd points out...there is no more dangerous enemy in our Lord's mind than the hypocrite. They too will be known by the work they do. And we are not to listen to those who claim special knowledge about the end times. God alone has control over the end times.

God's Grace compels us to do good works. The "fruit" is the result of the work we do, and the work we do is for the honor and glory of God our Father...and to bring others to him. Like a tree that gives us healthy and good fruit, we want to always ask God to help us act with joyful thanksgiving for adopting us through Jesus...and always try to do the right thing.

If we do this...we will be living today's Epistle and Gospel...we will be putting God's free gift of Grace to work...we will be known by the work we do.

