

X Trinity 2023

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*I Cor. 12.1-11      St. Luke 19.41-46*



Does God cry? If we were to travel to modern-day Jerusalem and go to the Mount of Olives, we would want to visit the Franciscan Church called *Dominus Flevit*...Latin for "the Lord wept". This is the traditional site of the event recorded in today's Gospel.

Jesus has completed his earthly ministry and is about to begin his ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. He stops with his friends on the Mount of Olives. Today we would see the Dome of the Rock. Jesus would have seen Temple Mount with the Temple dominating the city skyline. And Jesus wept...God wept.

Jesus is not crying for himself...he knows he will go on to fulfill the prophecies Moses and Elijah talked to him about...what we heard in last week's Gospel for Transfiguration. He is crying for the people and their failure to see him for who he really is. He is crying for the city, which will be sacked by the Roman army some 37 years later...

*...."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!"*

When Jesus entered the city on that first Palm Sunday he went directly to the Temple. His tears turned to anger and he overturned tables and threw all the moneychangers and sellers out of the Temple. They were ripping their own people off. He quotes Isaiah and Jeremiah...

*..."My Temple will be called a house of prayer. But you have turned into a hideout for thieves."*

Today's Gospel is difficult for us to read...it is the story of how we brought Jesus to tears. God cries for us...especially when our actions damage the special love relationship we have with him. We may cry too when people we know and love and care about hurt us. But our tears can have a positive effect on us...they can compel us to make changes in our lives and try to do better.

For us to understand the Gospel and its implications for us, we must first understand what set Jesus off in the first place. People had to pay Temple Tax in Temple money...not Roman coins. People had to purchase animals to be sacrificed in the Temple. Currency exchange and selling animals was part of doing business. What set Jesus off was unfair business practices and greed. The moneychangers and sellers had hijacked their religion to serve themselves. They were disrespecting God and his house by wrongly using the gifts of money and animals he provided them.

There is a connection between the Epistle and Gospel and it has to do with using God's gifts properly. Our friend Paul heard about the false teaching and fraudulent use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit going on in the Corinthian Church. Some church leaders had hijacked the parish to serve their own agenda and criticized parishioners who disagreed with them. Needless to say...Paul was grievously vexed.

Paul believed in tough love. He was concerned about the Corinthian Church's spiritual health and welfare. We also need to pay attention to what Paul says. Every one of us is blessed with God's gift of the Holy Spirit himself. He doesn't want us to miss out on opportunities to serve God using the gifts he has given us.

Not all of us have the same gifts...together and used properly...they serve God and help build up Saint Joseph Parish and the Church throughout the world. We should focus on the individual gifts God gives each of us to do our work...whatever those gifts are and however they show themselves...and not worry about or compare ourselves to others.

Our secular work is also an extension of our Parish life. Our work outside this place should be honest, full of compassion and respect for others, and grounded in Christian love.

God has equipped each of us with the tools we need to do his work. Let's thank him for the gifts he has given us, let's use them wisely, and let's not forget to thank him for Jesus, who came to save us!

