

VIII Trinity 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 8.12-17 St. Matthew 7.15-21



Do you have a favorite Psalm or Bible passage that resonates with you? Many people do. We find comfort, encouragement and guidance in the words we read and they often speak to us on a personal level. The Psalms and Bible passages we read are then more than just words.

In this morning's Epistle from Romans, Paul writes through Jesus we have become God's adopted children. As an adopted child myself, this has special meaning for me. My adoptive parents loved me and nurtured me and helped shape me into the person I am today. It did not matter that I was not their biological son.

Adopted children are supposed to have the same relationship with their adoptive parents natural children enjoy. Because we are God's adopted children, we have the same rights and privileges Jesus has. We get to call God by the same name Jesus used to address him...*Abba*...the Aramaic word for "Father".

But *Abba* is more of a term of endearment and intimacy...more like "Daddy" or "Papa". I called my mother "Mama" and my father "Dad". When we call God...*Abba*...just as Jesus did...we are saying we have the same kind of intimate, personal, loving relationship with God that Jesus has...and still show God the respect due him and him alone.

Paul reminds us God's Spirit "joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God's children". We can't become God's adopted children through any action of our own. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts and helps us to know we are God's adopted children because he loves us and wants this for us.

Paul also reminds us because we are God's children we have an obligation to live as his children...to conduct our lives in the way Jesus did...to act with love and compassion for others. We may have to make personal sacrifices along the way...which Paul says is our way of sharing Christ's suffering. Because we are God's adopted children...we also have the promise to share life with Jesus in heaven forever. Our actions define who we are...and they do speak louder than words.

The Gospel is also about actions speaking louder than words. In his commentary on the Gospel, Father Massey Shepherd writes... *"Our lives are tested by the deeds of righteousness that fulfill the will of God, not by clamorous professions of faith"*.

Jesus warns us to be on our guard against false teachers. They might look good on the outside and say all the right things, but they are really out to serve themselves. They may be able to hide their true selves from others for a while...but not from God. They will eventually be found out and exposed for the frauds they are.

People in Jesus' time made their living working the land. They would have understood what he meant by a healthy tree bearing good fruit and an unhealthy tree bearing bad fruit...or none at all. All of us... clergy and laypeople alike...are in the business of doing God's work. We can only do that when our hearts are open to the Holy Spirit working in and through us. We want to be trees producing good fruit... and pray for more trees producing good fruit.

That means our lives must be an open book...transparent before God and others. We should always conduct our lives as if we have no secrets to keep...and why would we want to keep secrets? It's all about transparency and openness in what we say and what we do.

Let's think about what the Collect for Purity at the beginning of the Mass teaches us:

- *God...Daddy...knows what is in our hearts*
- *He knows what we want and need*
- *We can't keep secrets from him*
- *He helps us be open to himself and others*
- *We love him and he helps us love others*

We have been blessed by God who has made us his adopted children. We get to call him *Abba*..."Daddy"...*"Papa"*. Our words must lead us into doing good and positive things. Our actions must speak louder than our words.

