



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4794 Curtis Blvd Port St John Fl 32927

2nd Week after Epiphany
January 16, 2022

✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.

The passage selected for the sermon is taken from the Gospel:

“it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

St Mark 1:10-11

Every week for the last two years, after the sermon, you hear me recite the offertory sentence. It is almost always the verse from the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, verse 5, “Let your light so shine before men that they see your good work and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.” Sometimes those phrases we hear the most often just become background noise, and we cease to really listen to their meaning. Today’s Gospel is an opportunity for us all to consider and how the message should be reflected in our lives.

Humbling oneself to be washed from uncleanness and sin has a long tradition in the Jewish history. The Syrian general Namaan was cured from both his leprosy and his pride when he was sent to wash in the Jordan by the prophet Elisha. Likely, he washed in the same part of the river that St John was using to baptize. The baptism of John for repentance was built on the earlier tradition of Namaan.

St. John had been baptizing for a good while before Jesus came to him. He had established a reputation as both a religious figure, and as the likely Messiah. His baptism was a call to repentance and change of life. His reputation was well established with those whose livelihood would be affected by the arrival of the Messiah. Those with wealth he commanded to share. The Publicans, he commanded to take only their appointed portion. The soldiers were told not abuse their authority or cause violence. Even John and Andrew, who would become Apostles, transferred the expectations of earthly power to Jesus from their prior allegiance to the Baptist.

When Jesus arrived, and bade John to baptize Him, the expectation of the Baptism was entirely changed. It ceased to be a symbol and became a sacrament. St. John the Baptist sat in judgment of his followers and commanded them with the authority of a prophet. He was commanding and fearsome figure, looking every bit the Messiah’s chief general, if not actually the Messiah. Jesus on the other hand came to John with obedience and humility. From this very first encounter, we see Jesus defining the character we should have as His followers.

John knew that he had no authority over the Messiah. His Baptism was merely foreshadowing of the sacrament that Jesus would institute. He was incredulous when Jesus submitted himself. Matthew records that

John tried to forbid the act, saying I have need to be baptized of thee. Jesus responded, “suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.”

What Jesus is teaching John, and all of us, is that appearances do matter. By this act of humility and obedience, he established the legitimacy of John as prophet, the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He also showed us that He would share our nature, our temptations, our burdens and our responsibilities. He would do what appears right, because that is the character that He wants us to emulate. Not “appearing to do right” in a hypocritical sense, but humbling ourselves and lifting up our brothers so that the world can see who we are, and what we have to offer them.

As John performed the ritual he had repeated so many times before, something unique and mystically transcendent happened. The Father showed His presence to His people, making the proclamation that, “this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. The Spirit of the Father’s love, in the person of the Holy Ghost, descends upon Jesus in the form of the dove and abides with Him. The Holy Trinity is bearing witness to the obedient and sacrificial love the Son has for the Father, and the Father’s will that his creatures should not perish, but receive everlasting life in His Son.

This moment is nothing less than an act of Creation. It is as powerful, actually more powerful, than the creation of the world and imparting of His breath to be the life of Adam and Eve. In that original act of Creation, He made us creatures in His image, with free will and the ability to be obedient and loving, or not. In this moment with John the Baptist, He established Baptism as the way that we are transformed from creatures whose free will has failed them, into sons and daughters, who share the very life and love of God Himself. In the

Incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God, takes on our Nature, to reclaim and transform it. In this baptism, God gives us His Son, to give us the privilege of sharing His being. The Holy Spirit that descended upon the Beloved Son abides in and with Him, but Jesus extends the Holy Spirit to us as we are transformed into the sons and daughters of God. We become temples of the Spirit of God.

As such, as new creatures sharing in the life and love of God, it is our bounden duty to reflect that gracious gift and transformation to the world. As Jesus, in his Godly kindness shares His Nature with us, we are to reflect it back into the world. As we are drawn to His Light, we are to become candles, lights to the world, drawing those that abide in darkness to us, and through us to the very light and love and life of God, which we know through Jesus Christ.

The children of the circumcision of the heart, those of us who have been baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, must make our character and identity known to the world. We do that by giving good example in the way we treat each other. We are known by the way we make brothers of those who are estranged from us, or who have been cruel to us. We are known by our willingness to forgive, and to ask forgiveness. We do that by being obedient and humble, as Jesus was to His Father on that day at the river. The way we are to preach the Gospel is to do what appears to be good, to fulfill all righteousness, to share the Holy Spirit that is given to us in Baptism.

“Let your light so shine before men that see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen