



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Blvd port St John FL 32729-five

Passion Sunday & the Feats of St Patrick March 17, 2024

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

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, And he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, “Thou art not yet 50 years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” Jesus said unto them, “Verily, Verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.” St. John 8:56-58

Our country has become intolerant of any opinions or ideas that are different. When the volume of rhetoric and hate fail to win the day, each side resorts to Science as the arbiter of Truth. Of course, no one who is familiar with real science would ever believe that truth comes from science. Every absolute of science has ultimately been disproved. The world is not flat, the sun does not revolve around the earth, hidden and previously unknown bacteria cause diseases, the atom can be split. Now we have theoretical physics which is entirely speculative and uses unknown and unmeasurable forces that rule and trump the old standbys of science, gravity and motion.

What science can actually do is tell us the current limit of our understanding. It tells us what we don't know yet. Science can't tell us the source of the universe, the purpose of our existence, the yearning we have to know God and to be touched by Him. It is by science that we know what is miraculous. Our experience tells us our limits. The miraculous is the source of our understanding, of

our purpose and of our destination. It is the miraculous that reveals the Truth.

Jesus tells us these miracles He performed were done to fulfill the Scriptures and to prove His identity. A miracle is something that cannot be explained by “scientists”. Miracles don't invalidate science, they stand apart and above science, as Truth, which can only be comprehended by faith and grace. Scripture, inspired by the Holy Ghost, tell us that the works of Jesus are divine miracles. Scientism, not science but the political application of science, says that miracles can be explained away as delusion, or misunderstanding, or simply symbolic prose. Both parties can't be correct. Someone is lying.

That makes us squeamish. We hate to stand up and be counted, to take sides, to be viewed as simplistic or backward because we do believe in sacred text and God's work as miraculous. Scientism rules this world, and the world will laugh at us if we dispute it. We don't quite dare to say Jesus was a liar, so we say, the Church misinterprets His words and sins in His Name, or we say He was a fable that shows the potential of man, and that He is not historical but allegorical. Or we say the writers of the Gospels were naïve, deluded by their lack of scientific knowledge and that the life of Jesus only seemed to be miraculous. Or we say, He was a good man, or a great prophet, a good example equal to Buddha, Mohammed or John Smith.

But Jesus doesn't pull punches. He says clearly in today's Gospel, “If I say the Truth, why

do you not believe me.” He says “I Am”, I am the One God, the Son of God, revealed to mankind, and if I say that I am anything less, than “I shall be a liar, like unto you.” We can’t have it both ways. We can’t take Jesus “very seriously” and deny that He is who He claims to be. Either, He is the Son of God, and the miracles He performs to manifest His Glory are Divine, or He is a pathetic liar, and we are all doomed. There is no salvation in a Jesus Christ who is less than who He claims to be, who did less than die for our sins and rise again to defeat death for us.

St. Paul writes in 1st Corinthians that, “If Christ be not raised (from the dead) then your faith is in vain, and ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” (1st Cor. 15:16-7)

Jesus tells us, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” Jesus isn’t saying he was a man before Abraham was, He is proclaiming the words of the burning bush, He is revealing His true name to the Jews and to the world. Jesus Christ is “I am who I am.” He is God, and man can never explain His being, His Glory, His love for us and His sacrifice. The Jews pick up stones to throw at Jesus because they do understand. They get it. Either Jesus is who He claims to be, or he is a delusional madman and sociopath who will turn the world upside down and cause the death of countless people who would believe his lie. The Jews faced the Truth and denied it. God have mercy on them. We face the same Truth today, and sadly, we still waffle, we rationalize and make excuses it. We reduce truth to symbolism. God have mercy on us.

Jesus says, I am the Way, the Life and the Resurrection. There is no life but life in me, there is no Truth but my Truth, and no salvation but by faith in me. We moderns hate that. We hate that confrontation.

Jesus says, “that if you deny me before men, I will deny you before the Father”. We know that for some un-knowable reason, we have been blessed as first fruits of Christ, to live in this world knowing the Name of God, His love for us, and the Truth of Salvation. We know that we accept that Truth by revelation and faith and not by experience. We know that we have been given the responsibility of witnessing the Truth about Jesus Christ to the world in our Words and by our lives.

But Jesus also tells us that if confess Him before men that He will confess us before His Father. When we look beyond the limits of science and toward the purpose for which we were created, we find the truth, that God is love. Not just that God loves us, but that God is Love. It is only in the Light of that truth that we can understand and proclaim that “God so loved the world, that He have His only begotten Son to the end that all that believe in should not perish, but have everlasting life”.

There is power beyond the imagination that comes from that truth. That is the power that was found in St Patrick. He had been a simple English boy in a common seaside town. He was captured by pirates that raided the town and sold into slavery in Ireland. He served in bondage there, learning the language and customs until, as a young man, he was able to escape and return to England. In gratitude for his delivery from slavery, he dedicated himself to Jesus and became a priest.

In his prayers, God came to him and explained that his captivity, his fear, his bondage and escape was meant to prepare him for a powerful ministry. He was to return to Ireland, a pagan land worshipping the Celtic religion and their snake god, and convert them to the truth. St Patrick heeded the call, and over the course of his lifetime, the whole of Ireland was converted to Christianity. The snakes were, in fact, driven from Ireland. Even more miraculously, the faith he sowed in Ireland led to the Irish becoming missionaries. St Patrick’s own beloved Britain completed its conversion to Christianity by the efforts of priests that descended from His mission. From there, the Gospel was preached through the English empire and even to our own shores here in America.

Science constantly changes, but God’s truth is not only unchangeable, but the character of this world, destined to darkness and death, is re-created in that truth, and carries us beyond the barrier the science cannot cross, the barrier of death. Our faith carries us from the Cross to the resurrection, through the door of death, and to eternal love and life.

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

The Collect

Almighty God, in your providence you chose your servant Patrick to be the apostle to the Irish people, to bring those who were wandering in darkness and error to the true light and knowledge of you: Grant us so to walk in that way that we may come at last to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*