

SERMON – 8MAY05 ASCENSION SUNDAY/MOTHER’S DAY

PRE-SERMON: I’m eternally grateful to be here....and I want to say to each one of you “HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY!” okay? I have some good news and some not so good news. The not so good news is that the topic that I’ve chosen to speak on this morning is not Mother’s Day. The good news is that I’ve been limited to no more than eight minutes, and I’m already into them, to get this over and done with. So bear with me, okay? Horace, don’t let me bust my time.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN!

It is important for you to know that I’m an individual that thrives on feedback. I sometimes don’t like everything what I hear...in terms of feedback to me...but, I always listen to it and I always consider it. In short an improvement plan for me is second nature. Why am I telling you this? I’m telling you because one of the things that I had hoped you would have taken from my last lesson, from my last message, is that there are ample opportunities, I suspect, for you to provide me some feedback so that I can become better at doing this. And one day...just maybe one day...with God’s grace and your feedback and a lot of practice, I can become as good as these two individuals [pointing to Frs Shaw and Joseph], our Rector and our Vicar. That’s my goal. I need a partnership with you so that my growth can actually take place, so that I can evolve and develop into a much better member of the clergy of this fine church. Okay? So work with me here guys. Give me some feedback. Don’t worry about hurting my feelings or about it not being safe. I honor you when you give me feedback by giving you the right attitude and the appropriate way of receiving that feedback.

The Gospel reading this morning was taken from [the Gospel of] Luke 24 verse 29. And there is a secondary reference that was a part of the Epistle [reading] from the Acts of the Apostles chapter 1 verses 5 through 12.

Here we find Jesus completing his final task among men, but not as a man rather as a material-spirit. One who was just as sinless and just as divine as the historical Jesus, but in a different form...resurrected bodily. We can think on this monumental event as the closing act of his "beingness." His ascension essentially closed that act. And that act was an act of transition. When you think about it, from the moment of his birth right up to His resurrection, he was very much the historical Jesus...very much the divine spiritual being. For those forty days after the resurrection to the point of His ascension, that was a transition period. We can think of him as the pre-Easter Jesus, and you can think of the Jesus that we walk with today as the post-Easter Jesus. That is, the Jesus that the Christian church grew up around. Why is that significant...you may be asking?

Well, I'm going to tell you why it is significant to me. In the pre-Easter Jesus there was life, for Him, much like we enjoy and participate in life today. Oh, there were no conveniences, nor were there the touches of modernity. No, those were not there for him. But there were relationships that were very real, very physical. There was passion, [there was] emotion, there was everything that you would expect to find in a physical man, except there was perfection that you wouldn't expect to find in a physical man owing to His incredible divinity. The post-Easter Jesus, however, is a different creature. For us, the post-Easter Jesus is the essence of the Sacred, came as man from God, and left as a material-spirit and returned to God. What does that have to do with us? How is that significant or applicable to us in the 21st century west? It is significant in that if you look at the entire process, what you'll find is the kind of thing that we have to go through or

that we certainly can go through. We live a physical life [and yet] we have within us a spark of the divine. The challenge for most of us is “how do we integrate the two?”. How can we bridge the physical over to the spiritual? And that is a part of that ascension process...at least as I conceive and describe it to you. That is our daily...hourly...ascension, attempting to awaken and realize the god within that is surrounded by the very physical without. It is no small feat.

The relevance for us in the *here and now* is less about believing that the narrative is true or not...the narrative is what it is. But for us, it's the understanding that with each breath, we undergo the very same process. We must choose, then. We must choose, either to consciously remain rooted in the illusions of a purely physical existence, or we must choose to consciously and continuously ascend to the very height of the spiritual self. We will transcend the limits of the emotional and mental self...and in so doing we'll experience the Sacred. We will...in that brief moment...be transformed through the domains of consciousness to realize our true identity and our true purpose.

How do we achieve this incredible feat? The apostle Paul has given us a wonderful starting point in his letter to the Philippians. In Philippians 4:8 he writes,

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

It must begin with objects of virtue being held as thoughts, which give way to the practice of spiritual disciplines (prayer, meditation, study, etc).

We are confronted with the choices more times in a given day than we can count. Without consciously activating an intention, a mind, if you will, of purposeful living, i.e., ascending beyond physical existence, our illusions will appear more and more real. There is a higher reality that we, each of us, can experience, if we choose to. What's in it for me? Simply put...less of me!

[John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.]

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