

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

St. Joseph's Side of the Story

Pete Burak

Hi, I'm Pete Burak. Let's begin with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord Jesus, we give You this time, we give You our whole lives, we give everything that we... who we are, what we long to be. All of our fears, all of our joys, all of our sufferings this day, Lord, they're all Yours. And Lord, let us be like Your earthly father, Saint Joseph: Completely obedient, humble, and a true disciple. Lord Jesus, fill us with Your Spirit. Let us be recreated in You. Let us receive today the joy and the peace and the grace that You have for us. Amen. Amen.

Alright. So, have you ever been a part of something where... something really good, and something that was really successful even, and you played a critical role in that success? That at the end of the day, when you look back on whatever it was, it would not have happened had you not been a part of it? And yet kind of somebody else, or multiple people, received more glory than you, or more recognition, or were more critical to the success of the team. If you've ever been in that position, you may have experienced that kind of momentary, or maybe even long-term feeling of, like, "Ugh, I didn't get my due." Or "I just wish people had noticed." Or "Maybe I should have played a slightly different role."

And our pride is at stake, right. Our pride can rise up within us and just, like, instead of just doing the good thing for the sake of doing it, we look for the recognition that comes back to us. And that is so obviously not the way we're supposed to live, and yet so often the way we do it. So often, we find ourselves in that position, struggling with those feelings, and maybe even end up feeling guilty about it, and maybe it even creates rifts in the relationships.

So all of that to say that that would have been totally natural for Saint Joseph, who we want to talk about today. Saint Joseph could have very easily been like "Hey, what the heck? Why isn't anyone paying attention to me? Look how much I had to sacrifice. Look how much my life changed. Look how much I had to adjust in order to be part of this new thing that God was doing, sending His Son into the world." And, you know, even in the bible, I don't even think he speaks. I mean, he's kind of the silent figure who plays a critical role in the bringing into the world of the God man, Jesus. Raising, protecting, providing for, and then being able to launch Jesus into His ministry. Like, in some ways, none of that happens unless Joseph steps up to the plate and does what he's supposed to do.

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

And so I just proposed those 2 things because I think Joseph is extremely relatable to us, and also a vision for how men and women can be elevated through grace. Like we can relate to Joseph, and relate to the very natural feelings that must have arisen in him at every different point along this journey, and yet also recognize that, like, what the gospels present to us is an incredible man of virtue who was able to receive everything that God was doing in his life, and then still move forward with confidence. And ultimately, he is recognized as one of, if not the greatest, one of the greatest men who has ever lived, you know. His name has kind of gone out through centuries and centuries. People know who he is, people respect him, people revere him, people pray and ask his intercession because of his faithfulness.

And so today, I want to focus on 3 things we can learn from the life of Saint Joseph. 3 things that we can pull out, out of this incredibly virtuous man, who may feel, like, way out there, but actually was a man just like us. You know, had the same temptations, had the same desires, had the same fears, and yet was able to overcome them through the grace of God. So here are the 3 things that I want to focus on.

First is this: Maybe the quintessential mark of a disciple - there's a lot of different ways to describe a disciple - but one of the most fundamental ways is a disciple hears what the master is saying, and does it. And another way of putting it is: What is God telling you, and what are you going to do about it? A disciple lives in those realities, and a disciple is constantly asking themselves "What is God telling me?" And then "What am I going to do about it?" And Saint Joseph was an incredible disciple when it came to this, because every time God asked him to do something, he did something about it. Not only did he do something about it, but first he heard, he listened, he paid attention, he received, and then he actually did something about it.

And certainly, you know, there were some pretty kind of supernatural circumstances that went into a lot of the times that God spoke to him - A lot of dreams, a lot of angels, a lot of kind of like, whoa, kind of get you...wake you up a little bit. But Joseph still had the chance to say no to it. Joseph still had the chance to back away. Joseph still had his free will operational, where he could have said "No. This is not what I want, this is not who I am, this is not what I want to be a part of." And he could have backed away. But instead, Joseph, a disciple of God, and ultimately a disciple of His Son, eventually, you know, hears what God is saying and does something about it.

So, the first thing I want us to focus on in Saint Joseph is his radical obedience, the radical obedience coming from these 2 questions: What is God asking of you?

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

What is God telling you? And what are you going to do about it? Every day, in some ways, we could be asking God that constantly. “God, what are You saying to me? And what am I going to do about it?” Okay.

The second one is, I mean, just on, like, on a manly level, on just a human level, Joseph must have been full of courage. What a courageous man. Courageous to even take Mary as his wife, courageous to take a very, very pregnant woman on a journey to Bethlehem, courageous to get up in the middle of the night and take that young family with his newborn son to Egypt, courageous to receive the 3 Wise Men, courageous to create a life for them in Egypt, and then certainly courageous to bring them back when the angel told them to. Joseph just exhibits throughout the entire infancy narrative, and then even the temple and all of that, just this man of great courage. A man of great courage.

One of my favorite definitions of courage is from Josef Pieper: “The willingness to sustain a wound for a noble cause.” The willingness to sustain a wound for a noble cause. Courage is the willingness to be hurt for something greater than yourself. And Joseph clearly demonstrates this time and time again, not only from a physical standpoint - you know, they ran from Herod for fear of their lives - but also from just an even emotional, a spiritual, and just like fleshly perspective. Joseph took wounds, he took wounds from, I’m sure, what his neighbors thought of him, he took wounds from the life of celibacy that he and Mary enjoyed together.

There were wounds that would have come at them, or hurts that could have arisen, and he was willing to take those, and he was willing to step into it for the noble cause of loving Mary and loving Jesus, and participating in God’s plan. So he was a man of tremendous courage. And especially for the men who are watching, let us turn to Saint Joseph in this Advent season and just ask that some of the courage that was poured out into him, some of that grace to be bold would also fill our hearts as well. So that’s the second point, is he was courageous.

And the third one, I think, is maybe the most difficult, and I’ve already kind of alluded to it. One of maybe the most difficult for us to kind of really wrap our heads around and live in on a consistent basis, but Joseph was a man of incredible humility. And the way we know this most profoundly, I think, is through his silence. Through the fact that the father, the foster father of Jesus basically is a silent figure, and just plays his part at the beginning, and then kind of just disappears in the gospels. Yet his legacy, and the lessons he must have instilled in Jesus, and the patterns of life that he would have taught Him, and the human virtue that he would have helped Him grow in, and the way he would have taught Him how to pray, and the way he would have shown Jesus how to care for women by the way he would have cared for Mary, and all of these things speak volumes and

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

echo through history. But the recognition is very minimal, in the sense that he kind of... he lived a life of silence. He lived a life of humility. His desires, his plans, his, I don't know, pride was sacrificed on the altar of the greater purpose of what God had in store for mankind through Jesus and through Mary, and ultimately through him.

And so here is this guy who was faithful throughout his whole life without any fanfare. He doesn't even get to see the good parts of when Jesus begins His ministry, and people are healed, and people start to follow Him. He doesn't even get to be there, to have to courage to be by the cross when Jesus dies. You know how much that must have hurt, to not be there for Mary and for Jesus when... knowing that suffering was coming? I mean, Joseph heard the prophecy, that a sword would pierce Mary's heart, and that must have torn him up inside to not be there for those moments. Yet he was humble, and he submitted himself to God's will, and he was silent through it, and he was willing to just do this. He was willing to play his part for the kingdom. And now he is eternally in glory with his Son, with his Father, and with his wife in a really profound way.

So, as we move through Advent, I think there's 3 things I'd like us to consider, is: How can we grow in our ability to hear what God is saying and to do something about it? So the first piece, obedience. How can we grow in our courage, to be able to respond boldly and willing to take a wound for the noble cause of whatever God is calling us to? And then how can we take our own desires and our own willingness to... or our own, you know, natural inclination to be recognized and want to be seen, and put that to the side, and do the right thing even if no one notices, and be humble enough to be confident enough in our humility actually - this is kind of ironic - to be confident enough that we can do these things because the Lord is there with us, and He sees it, and that's all we need. We live from the gift of His recognition, not the recognition of man. We are humbled because play the part that He has given us, not the part that we would choose for ourselves. I love this. Faithful without fanfare. Can we do that?

And so take a little audit of your life. Say "Where do I need to grow in obedience? Where do I need to grow in courage? And where do I need to grow in humility?" And take practical steps to do that. Think of things you can do throughout the rest of this Advent that will directly help you grow in those 3 areas, and then let's ask Saint Joseph to intercede for us. Let's do that right now, shall we?

Saint Joseph, thank you for your witness, thank you for your faithfulness, thank you for your courage, your humility. Lord. Lord, here I go, I'm in the habit of praying to Jesus. But Saint Joseph, thank you for who you are and what you showed us, and Saint Joseph, we just ask that you would intercede for us at the right hand of your

Pray More Advent Retreat 2018 - Transcript

Son right now, that we would receive a special outpouring of grace today to live a life like yours, faithful to your Son. Amen. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.