

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

There are so many big and important things going on in the world, and they deserve our attention. The New Year, the passing of Governor Mario Cuomo, several pieces of legislation that could have significant implications for us all... Oh, and then there's the Epiphany coming this Wednesday!

But for the moment, I'd like to focus on one seemingly insignificant passing that may have escaped your attention. On New Year's Day, Donna Douglas died. Who is that, you may wonder? None other than Elly May Clampett on "The Beverly Hillbillies."

She had a few more serious roles to her credit, in particular an episode of The Twilight Zone and a flick with Elvis Presley. But for me - and pretty much every kid of my generation - she was Elly May, the pretty tomboy who could beat up her giant cousin Jethro.

She was an icon of my childhood - right along with Gilligan, Ginger and Mary Ann.

But here's something that surprised me and made me question my perception of the world. It was an epiphany of sorts - a new way of seeing the world around us.

She was 82 when she died.

Sure, everyone must age. That's the nature of things. But that's older than my parents!

Every time I watched the show as a kid, I thought of her as young and vibrant, one of the big kids to be sure, but still one of the kids. Meanwhile Mom and Dad were, well, parents. It never occurred to me that Elly May could be anywhere near as old as my folks, let alone older.

This helps me remember that things are not always what they appear. Back when she was playing a teenager, Donna Douglas was in her 30s. More importantly, it reminds me that we see what we want. I wanted and expected Elly May to be young and innocent. At the same time, I wanted my parents to be adults - stable, sure of the world, absolutely able to take care of me and my siblings.

How we choose to see people - how we need to see them sometimes - makes a big difference in how we relate to them. So, how do we see each other? How do you see your fellow parishioners? Do you see them as fellow journeyers on the way to God? Do you see them as rivals for that position you wanted? Do you see them as people to take care of you - or conversely people you feel it necessary to take care of?

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

Here's another question to ponder as we begin the new year. How does God see us? Let me throw out one thought on that: Recently, a young couple gave birth in the parish. I got to watch them with their infant and see how amazingly much they love that child. They're gaga over her.

That, I suspect, is how God sees us all the time. Even as we grow, make mistakes, stray from home in often unhealthy ways, God still sees that infant in us that God is just gaga about.

If Epiphany means anything, it is an opening of our eyes to see things as they really are. Each day, I have these little epiphanies, but the one that means the most to me - the one that those magi embodied so long ago - is how much God loves me, and that this will never change. Just as Donna Douglas will always be for me Elly May Clampett, so will we always be for God, the child he loves unreasonably. I can live with that.

In Christ,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

The News of the Diocese

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: Please pray for these diocesan ministries this week. If you want to check out the entire year's calendar for intercession, it's simple to find - go to <http://www.diocesen.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

3 All Angels' Church, Manhattan

4 Grace Church, Manhattan

5 St. Andrew's Church, Manhattan

6 On The Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ; we pray that we may share the light of Christ in the world.

7 St. Mary's Church, Manhattanville, Manhattan

8 Grace Church, West Farms, The Bronx

9 On the feast day for Julia Chester Emery, we pray for the continuing mission of the diocese.

ALSO STILL PRAYING FOR ISRAEL AND GAZA:

Let us continue to light a candle for peace in the Holy Land - and everywhere. Prayer is our most potent antidote to hatred.

1. Candle for Peace

Please also light a candle on Fridays - holy to both faiths - for Peace

Let us Light Candles for Peace

Two mothers, one plea:

Now, more than ever, during these days of so much crying,
on the day that is sacred to both our religions, Friday, Sabbath Eve

Let us light a candle in every home - for peace:

A candle to illuminate our future, face to face,

A candle across borders, beyond fear.

From our family homes and houses of worship

Let us light each other up,

Let these candles be a lighthouse to our spirit

Until we all arrive at the sanctuary of peace.

2. The Mothers Prayer:

God of Life:

You who heals the broken hearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other to sustain Your Name in this world:

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.
For these I weep, my eye sheds water:
For our children crying in the night,
For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.
For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?
With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at these harsh times
I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.
Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one for another.
Inscribe our lives in the book of Life
For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.
For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,
May this be your will
And let us say Amen.

Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie

Donate to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem: There is an ongoing appeal for donations to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and its Al Ahib Hospital in Gaza. Even after a month, even after the ceasefires, the situation in Gaza is desperate, and the hospital continues to see more patients than it can handle. The hospital is still very low on supplies and fuel to keep the lights on (and medical devices running).

If you would like to support the good and holy work of the Diocese of Jerusalem and its hospital, please send donations to:

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
25 Old King's Highway No., Suite 13
Darien, CT 06820

Or online at www.afedj.org

Also, Episcopal Relief and Development is gathering funds for the hospital. Donate online at: www.episcopalrelief.org or mail to Episcopal Relief and Development, PO Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058 (memo line: Middle East Fund)

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

The News of the Church

Pledge Reminder: Please remember to make your pledge if you have not already. If you lost your pledge card or never got one, FEAR NOT! You can get one from the parish office or by asking Fr. Chuck or one of the Vestry members.

Pageant Rehearsals: Pageant rehearsals continue Saturday, January 3 at 5:00 pm. There will likely be a rehearsal Monday, January 5 at 7:00 pm. Then on Wednesday at 7:00 pm, and Thursday at 6:00 pm (to give cast members a chance to attend the Fireside Chat - see below).

Fireside Chat: Our first Fireside Chat of the season will be this Thursday, January 8 at 7:00 pm. As always, these lectures are in the Chapel. This lecture is about the Rymph family, one of the early prominent families of the area.

Announcement of Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of St. James' Church will be held Sunday, January 25, 2015. The meeting will begin with a joint Eucharist at 9:00 AM. Voting will start at the beginning of the service and continue through to the start of the business portion of the meeting. According to New York state law and church canon, you must be at least 18 and a contributing member of record in order to be eligible to vote. At this meeting, we will elect new Vestry member and bestow the St. James' Medal.

Outreach Meeting and Search for New Chair: There will be an Outreach Meeting on Wednesday, January 14 in the Wilks Room at 7:00 pm. We encourage all committee members to be there, as this will be Deb Belding's final meeting as the chair. One important topic of discussion will be the next committee chair. This meeting is open to all - and we especially welcome anyone who is interested in learning more about Outreach at St. James'!

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim and Sharyn Burke, Ashley Coyne, Kathleen Craft, Michael Day, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jane Gagliardoto, John Golden, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Liz Handman, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Dalton K., Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Doris Mack, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Pat Rooney, John Schroeder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, Tracy, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Bobbie Wells, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Schedules

Schedules have been omitted while they are being updated.

This Week's Lectionary

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalm 84

Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a

Matthew 2:13-15,19-23

NOTE: Audio recordings of some sermons are now available on St. James' website, www.stjameshydepark.org Look under "Worship"

Sermon Preached on
First Sunday after Christmas
(December 28, 2014)

"Cosmic Light Show"

In the beginning was a very Big Bang, and it was one heck of a show that nobody got to see but God himself. Only recently have we been able to see echoes of it.

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

Amazingly, when I came up with the title, "Cosmic Light Show," I wasn't thinking of the big bang. I was thinking of John's language at the beginning of his gospel. It's so convoluted that, being a child of the early 70s, it always reminded me of Beatles lyrics. You know, "I am he as you are he as you are me, And we are all together." Very cosmic, man....

But the Big Bang makes more sense because John goes back to the very beginning in his gospel. Mark, who writes his gospel first, opens with the start of Jesus' adult ministry. Matthew and Luke start their Gospels roughly with the birth of Christ (well, Matthew with a genealogy of Jesus, and Luke with an explanation of why he wrote the gospel, but they quickly go into Christ's birth).

But John, who writes his gospel last, he figures none of them goes far enough back. He wants to start with the very, very, very beginning;

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

And the light, of course, is more than life. It is Christ Jesus.

But why does John go back to the beginning of the world?

Because he is writing for a people who do not start with a belief in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. He is writing for a diverse group of people with diverse belief systems including polytheistic or - frankly - no belief system at all. He has to do more than just make an argument that Jesus was God's son. He has to make the argument that God - the one true God - exists. Moreover, he also has to make the case that Jesus was there from there very beginning - otherwise, he can't very well be God. In a very real sense, John has to go to Jesus' cosmic roots.

No wonder it's kind of convoluted language. Not only is Jesus the Word, but he is the Light, too. He is God. And he was coming into the world.

We live in a world where John's kind of beginning is important. Like him, we're telling Jesus' story to people who do not have the base belief system in God. At least a quarter of Americans believe in no God at all.

So, we have to go back to the very beginning, too. That is, we have to start with not just the beginning of the world but the beginning of the universe, and in that beginning, in that Big Bang, we have to see God.

I'm no physicist, but you will notice that the giant explosion that created us involved - and still involves - a lot of light. So, I think John was onto something. God spoke, and out of nothing

St. James' E-pistle

January 2, 2015

came everything, and light shines through everything. Light, which was from the beginning and is now, light which overcomes darkness.

For us, it is not so hard to see the hand of God in the Big Bang, not so hard to see God's time table be on such a grand scale that a million years is like the blink of an eye - but at the same time where every single life is precious, and where God's love for us is so deep that the light which was always there could become one of us and dwell among us just so we know that we, too, are people of the light.

I was watching a show on the Cosmos awhile ago, and it said that we are all made up of the same thing that stars are made of. That we are all, in essence, star people.

That's kind of what John, in his convoluted, Beatles sort of way was saying - we are born of light. And when we let the light of Christ into our lives, we shine more brightly than we can imagine.

Making that connection between God and Christ and the creation of the universe is not easy, but in our generation, it is essential. We can't do it alone, but when we truly let Christ shine through us, it works.

To put it another way, let us remember the words of today's collect:

"You have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives."

Amen.

All
Welcome!

Free
Admission!

A

Desert



Home



Companion

An Epiphany Pageant
Radio Variety Show

January 9, 2015 - 7:00 PM

St. James' Episcopal Church

4525 Albany Post Rd
Hyde Park, NY