

# St. James' E-pistle

## October 16, 2015

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

Earlier this week, the senior warden and I had a pretty exciting meeting with some parishioners who have consented to become part of our new Stewardship Committee.

Two things about this:

1. I don't want to name names just yet because we are still in the formation process, but I feel very good about this group.
2. I say "new" Stewardship Committee because we have obviously had Stewardship in the past. It's just that now we are taking a new approach to it, one which I believe will not only be more effective but also more faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

At our meeting, we talked about the theological underpinnings of Stewardship - that is, why do we do this? The answer? Because we are living in the Kingdom of God. Even if we're not there yet we're going to live like we are! And that means living a life of intense gratitude. It means living a life of remarkable care for each other - and for those whom we don't know, or even those who hurt us. It means we live a life with open hands, knowing that nothing belongs to us, but that God will give us what we need in order to do the work with which he also blesses us.

In short, Stewardship means how we manage the things in this life which God has put in our trust. Do we keep them for ourselves, try to grow them for ourselves, or take account of the work God is giving us and figure out what we need to do that work?

I regularly speak about a life of Stewardship - about approaching everything with the thought in mind that God has put this [whatever] in my trust to increase the Kingdom. Am I honoring that trust? Using the gifts placed before me to best effect? Am I giving thanks?

There will be new things we do this year - and throughout the year - to increase and improve our Stewardship. Meals together, conversations, prayers... But it will always be the same goal: To lift up our lives to God, to give ourselves to the Kingdom, and to encounter, empower, encourage those around us in their journeys to God.

With that in mind, please pray for the new Stewardship Committee. Pray that they happily complete their formation process. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide them so that they can lead us into a healthier place financially and spiritually.

And rejoice! A good time is about to be had by all.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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### The News of the Church

**Men's Breakfast:** Men! We're meeting for breakfast and a little church business at Cranberry's Saturday, October 17 at 8:00 AM. See you there!

**Get Your Parish Directory:** The new Parish Directory is now being distributed. A few photos or addresses did not make it in time for printing, so some information may be missing. Not to worry! There's space to add information, and we will constantly update the master copy so that future editions will have all the most current information.

**Graveyard Tour Tickets - Time Running Out:** **TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO GET YOUR GRAVEYARD TOUR TICKETS. THE FINAL TOURS ARE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, AND SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24. THERE ARE PLENTY OF OPENINGS, BUT NEXT WEEKEND IS THE FINAL WEEKEND OF THE TOURS. PLEASE HELP US GET THE WORD OUT!**

**Outreach Meeting, October 21:** There will be an Outreach Meeting on Wednesday, October 21 at 6:30 PM in the Wilks Room. All are invited!

**Order Thanksgiving Pies and Benefit the Community Garden:** **ORDER YOUR THANKSGIVING PIES BAKED BY C.I.A. STUDENTS.** Choose from Apple, Apple Crumb, Pumpkin, and Mincemeat. \$12 each. Call 845-229-0153 for more information. All proceeds benefit the Hyde Park Community Garden. See attached flier.

**Bible Study Reading 1 Kings:** We've had our fourth session in the book 1 Kings, so if you don't know anything about it, now's your chance! It meets every Thursday at 11:00 AM. Open to everyone.

**Reading Program Gets Go-Ahead:** Reading Adventures will begin at North Park Elementary School on Thursday, October 22, at 3:30. Volunteers need to talk with Anna Marie Pitcher. Thanks!

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**Thanksgiving Dinner Apple Pies:** St. James' has been asked to bake between 20 and 30 apple pies for the community Thanksgiving dinner, which will take place on Sunday, November 22. There will be a sign-up sheet in the Narthex indicating how many apple pies you can bake and have here at the church by church time on the 22nd. Please consider baking! Let Fr. Chuck know!

**Thanksgiving Service:** Notice is also given that on Tuesday, November 24, the community churches will hold their annual Community Thanksgiving Service. This year, it will be at St. James' Chapel, which hosts three other churches along with our own occasional services. If you would like to participate in the service, please let Fr. Chuck know.

**Pledge Clerk Desperately NEEDED!** We really need a Pledge Clerk to work with one of our experienced clerks. We'll show you the ropes. You would serve about once a month. Please consider stepping up to the pledge clerk plate!

**Take A Table:** If you would like to have one or more of our old tables, you can have them! We recommend a donation of \$10 per table, but if that's too much, give what you want and take what you want. There are 16 tables in all.

**Take Some Business Cards:** Share your church with your friends and neighbors with a St. James' Business Card. You never know when you have the opportunity to help someone find their way to God.

**Never Too Late For Sunday School:** Didn't get a chance to register for Sunday School earlier? Know a friend who might be interested? New to the parish? You can register at any time! Just ask Valerie Gaulin for a registration form. We'll be delighted to see you!

### **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."

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- 18 On the feast day for Saint Luke the Evangelist, we pray especially for all who are engaged in healing ministries.
- 19 St. Andrew's Mission, South Fallsburg
- 20 The Chaplaincy at the State University of New York, New Paltz
- 21 Episcopal Charities, for its Board and Advisory Committee
- 22 Resurrection Episcopal Day School, Manhattan
- 23 On the feast day for Saint James of Jerusalem, we pray for the courage to maintain our faith in times of crisis.
- 24 St. Paul's Church, Pleasant Valley

### **Praying For Peace Everywhere:**

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:

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

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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*

### **Please keep the following people in your prayers:**

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Sharyn Burke, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Barbara Knakal, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Slight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

## **Schedules**

*A Note about Schedules: The names you see below are those listed on their respective schedules. There are often times when, due to sickness or travel, substitutes are asked to fill in or trade positions. This will probably NOT be reflected in the lists below—so, if there is an inconsistency between what you see here and what you see on Sunday, that is alright.*

Birthdays  
(this past week): Dot Craft, Sharon O'Brien and Jasmine Thatcher

Birthdays  
(next week): Beverly Tas and Grant Ferris

Acolytes: October 18: Russell Urban-Mead, John Beyer and Anna Clark

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	October 25: Bryanna Burkhardt, Amelia McNamara and Braeden Hall
Altar Guild:	October 18: Team Number II October 25: o
8 a.m. Readers:	October 18: Deb Belding and Sue DeLorenzo October 25: Angela Henry and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	October 18: Patty Caswell and Justin Bohlmann October 25: Regina Ardini and Deirdre Mae Micker
Ushers:	October 18: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne October 25: Bill and Regina Ardini
Pledge Clerks:	October 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher October 25: Doug Belding and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	October 18: Ann Dingee, Sue Dingee and Chris, Sue and Sara Dingee October 25: Judy Douglass and Dottie Drake
Coffee Hour Hosts:	October 18: Deirdre Mae Micker, Brian Rance and the Urban-Meads October 25: Saira Shahani

### **This Week's Lectionary**

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

Sermon Preached on  
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost  
(October 11, 2015)

"The Eye of the Needle"

The parable of the camel going through the eye of the needle is one of those awkward things Jesus says that makes us want to skip over it.

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It's worse than that bit he said in last week's gospel about divorce.

I mean, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Frankly, it's so harsh that a lot of people spend a lot of time trying to work around it. Some time ago, some apologists for the Prosperity Gospel argued that the eye of the needle Jesus was talking about was really a gate in Jerusalem - a low gate that camels could only enter by kneeling down. That is, they said, you have to humble yourself before the lord.

While we do, in fact, need to humble ourselves before the Lord, this argument is poppycock.

Why? Well firstly because biblical archeologists say there was no such gate in Jerusalem.

Secondly, Jesus never made easy comparisons. He never said, "Oh, well you just need to bend down a bit - maybe grovel a little - and it's all good." Jesus almost always pushed his examples to the extreme - to the point of impossibility. Remember the whole, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off" thing?

Thirdly, the context doesn't allow this interpretation. Jesus is talking to a rich man. He invites the rich man to join his disciples. He sees a man who obeys all the laws, who loves God, who is seeking the higher ground. The text says Jesus looked at him and loved him, for Pete's sake.

So, when he invites the man to sell all his possessions, give them to the poor and follow him, Jesus really, really means it. And he means to make the man's life better, fuller, more joyful. The man leaves - sad - because his wealth holds him back.

When Jesus says it's easier for a camel to get through an eye of a needle, he's not so much condemning the man and grieving for him. Jesus had this wonderful new step in life for the man, and he could not do it.

So what is Jesus saying? Is he condemning all the rich to eternal death? Certainly, if you read Job today, you might think so. But - spoiler alert - God gives Job all his wealth back, and then some. He's even richer than before.

Then how do we understand the eye of the needle?

Remembering that all analogies are flawed, let me offer another - one that makes sense to me at least.

Imagine Jesus was into scuba diving. Now, I've never gone scuba diving before, so don't get all technical on me. But just imagine you're scuba diving. There are a lot of other divers, too. You're, say, 30 feet down. Not too deep, but your oxygen tank is running low. You can see the surface where your friends are, where the boat is, and most importantly, where the air is.

Everyone starts to head to the surface. Some divers are carrying nothing and pop up above the waves very quickly. Others are carrying heavy weights - they struggle to reach the boat because - even in the water - their burdens are so heavy. And some are stuck at the bottom, the weight they carry is so much, they can only look up and wonder how they will ever make it.

The surface of the water is the eye of the needle. The burden they carry - at least as Jesus sees it - is their wealth. From his point of view, only by letting go of those burdens will they ever

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keep from drowning. The fresh air beckons, but they can't even unfasten whatever it is that holds their weight - their wealth - to them.

Again, I want to emphasize that Jesus is not condemning the rich young man. He is grieving for him. He truly means that it is not just tough, but impossible to someone who is wedded to his wealth.

Now before we get all smug, let us remember that most Americans are rich by world standards. If you have a roof over your head, a car to drive and, say, a cell phone, you're in the elite.

Moreover, I'm convinced Jesus is speaking of more than just wealth. Pride, Ego, Fear, Anger - these all are related, and are all as equally difficult to let go of as wealth. They are the weights which keep us from the surface. They turn us into camels looking at a needle and thinking, "This will never happen."

So what do we do?

Aside from sell all our goods, give them to the poor and follow Jesus?

Jesus knows this is impossible for us. He wishes it for us, he knows that our lives will be better if we can do this, but as he tells the disciples, "For mortals it is impossible." Fortunately, he adds, "but not for God. For God, all things are possible."

It is impossible for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle. It is impossible for that diver to get to the surface without help. It is impossible for us, by ourselves, to let go of the fear, the anger, the pride that hold us back from realizing the life Jesus wants for us.

So we pray. We ask God for help. We say, "I want more than just following the rules and being a good person by society's standards. I want God. Save me God, and bring me to your presence, because I can't get there alone."

But don't be surprised if God does help you get there. It might be painful - it might mean truly opening your eyes to what's going on around you - the injustice, the poverty, the abuse of whole communities. It might mean God nudges you into an activism you never suspected, looking at your neighbor with new eyes.

But if we truly cry to God for help to our souls - despite what Job felt in today's reading, despite the despair we hear in Psalm 22 - God will lift us up to a place where we may have to let go of much - but where we will truly be able to breathe. Amen.

# Thanksgiving Pies



## Order Your Thanksgiving Pies

Baked by C.I.A. Students

Choose from Apple, Apple Crumb,  
Pumpkin, and Mincemeat.

\$12

Call 845-229-0153 for more information

All proceeds benefit the Hyde Park Community Garden