

St. James' E-pistle

October 21, 2016

Pulpit Notes

*"...for all who exalt themselves will be humbled,
but all who humble themselves will be exalted."*

Brothers and Sisters:

What a Fall we have had! Sunday school, Graveyard Tours, Community Garden, the start of Reading Adventures.... We've got a lot to be proud of.

Then we run into the words of Jesus like those above: "...for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." This is a quote from the Gospel this week, and it reminds us that even when we're feeling good about ourselves - and we can rightly be good about much of the work we do here - we are reminded that we are still just minor players in an immense play.

We simply aren't as good or as important as we sometimes like to think, and if we imagine that we are, then we will eventually be brought up short.

The opposite of that is also true: We're not as bad or hopeless as we sometimes think. God's love for us trumps our self-doubt - and our doubt in God!

If you can draw a lesson from part of a scripture verse - and I caution you to understand the context when you quote scripture - a lesson from this little quote might be that what God wants from us in this relationship is an honest understanding that we are creatures, that we are not independent, that we are not self-made, that we are not perfect or above others, but also that we are beloved, forgiven and forgivable, teachable and wonderfully creative.

The lesson is to keep a level head - neither puffing ourselves up nor putting ourselves down, because all the evidence around us shows that neither of these things helps anybody.

In the future, I hope to bring up more scripture quotes and have a quick word about them. If you have a quote that you would like to share with the congregation - and a word about what it means to you, I would like make this space open to you.

Scripture - even little snippets - can have a lot to teach us about how to live our daily lives. And so can you.

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So go out there this fall - and into the winter - humbling yourself by knowing that you're not "the best". But go out there knowing that you can joyfully try new things and be the creative, giving person you are because being the best doesn't matter. Being God's child does.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Graveyard Tours - A Fantastic Season: We have had a wonderful season this year. Superb acting, nearly every night sold out, delighted audiences! Thanks to everyone for your hard work!

Celebration of Garden: The Hyde Park Community Garden at St. James' closes out another successful season this Sunday with its celebration and blessing of the harvest. Thanks, Deb and all the crew for your hard work and care for the community.

Hyde Park Thanksgiving Dinner: The second annual "Hyde Park Thanksgiving Dinner - A Community Shares Appreciation" is November 22!

The Hyde Park Thanksgiving Dinner is a community event made possible by joint efforts of local volunteers and donors (local church leaders and parishioners, residents, organizations and businesses) contributing their time, resources and money.

The inaugural dinner last year was a great success with around +/- 130 people participated in the dinner.

Tickets for this year's dinner (at \$10 per person) are available at Cranberry's at Tilley Hall and Earthgoods Market starting October 10th.

Everyone is welcome!

Tickets are limited. Please get your tickets early in case they sold out!

The Dinner is still looking for more volunteers. You can learn more, and you can sign up to volunteer at www.comservhp.com.

Community Thanksgiving Service: The Annual Community Thanksgiving Service will take place this year on Tuesday, November 22 at 7:00 PM. The location is Regina Coeli, and the preacher is Rev. Jay Cookingham of the Bridge Builders Community Church. We hope to have a large representation from St. James'!

Music Update: Believe it or not, we are making progress in the search for an organist/choir director. Last week there was a meeting with the choir, out of which was formed a small working group to pursue candidates who have expressed interest in the position. We sent out

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a questionnaire and are now awaiting their responses. We'll keep you updated as things develop.

Newcomers Reception: Been at St. James' for a year or less? If so, you're invited to a Newcomers Reception on Friday, December 2 at 7:00 pm. This reception gives you a chance to meet more established parishioners, ask questions, and have a chance to learn what opportunities are available to get involved. Ask Fr. Chuck or a Vestry member for more information.

Looking for More Bible Verses (Thanks - and want More!): Many thanks to all of you who have offered your favorite bible verses! We are looking for more for couple of scripturally based projects. Send them in!

DONATE YOUR iPad! Please consider donating your old iPad - or any old tablet that can read a PDF file - to St. James'. We would like to have three or four tablets so we can download the digital bulletin onto them and let guests (or parishioners, of course) use them. This is especially helpful to those who are unfamiliar with the liturgy and all the books we use. You should erase everything on it, of course - all we need is a PDF reader and a browser (to download the information). Thanks!

Committees That Can Use Your Help

Stewardship: The Stewardship Committee is a group that helps coordinate our fall pledge drive as well as keep the concept of Christian Stewardship in our consciousness throughout the year. Never a large committee, the group of typically three members has been quite helpful. However, this year two of the three members have had to leave the group; one to become a Sunday School teacher, and the other because she has to leave the parish for the next few years.

So listen to your heart. Is God calling you to this ministry? Though it is not a heavy burden, the impact of the committee is huge on the ministry of St. James'.

Churchyard Committee: Our churchyard committee wants you. The committee oversees one of the most historic graveyards in the region, and is responsible for making sure it is kept up. It handles the sale and digging of graves as well. If you value our churchyard and want it to continue to be a source of comfort whose loved ones rest here as well as historical interest to those who visit, please join our committee. If you're interested, you can contact Carol Vinall at vinehall3@aol.com.

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Episcopal Election Toolkit Available: It is the official position of the Episcopal Church to encourage all eligible members to vote in every election. We see it not only as part of our civic duty but as part of our collective life of faith. If we are not engaged in the community, then we are withdrawn - which is not the example our Lord showed.

To encourage enthusiastic and informed participation in the election process, the Episcopal Church has published an Election "Toolkit" with information such as what representatives are up for election, who your officials are, and what the issues of the day are. It includes the Episcopal Church's official position on several issues, which may be helpful in your deliberations.

The most important thing in the church's eyes, however, is that we all go out and vote! Here's a link to the "Toolkit":

<http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal/EpiscopaliansVote>

Spiritual / educational websites to deepen your faith:

- Acts 8 Movement
- GrowChristians
- Episcopal Cafe (a favorite)
- The Slate Project (not affiliated with Slate magazine)
- Virtual Abbey
- Second Life Church (gives you a virtual church experience if you're into that sort of thing. Fun to look at maybe).
- Inward/Outward (daily meditations sent to your e-mail)
- "Edge of Enclosure" (weekly lectionary-based blog post)
- The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook)
- Anne Lamott (via Facebook)
- Jan Richardson - <http://paintedprayerbook.com> (Especially good for those grieving or interested in women's spirituality.)

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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.diocesenyn.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

- 23 The Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan
- 24 Trinity Church, Ossining
- 25 St. Philip's Church, Manhattan
- 26 Secretary and Assistant Secretary of Diocesan Convention
- 27 St. Clement's Church, Manhattan
- 28 Credentials Committee of Diocesan Convention
- 29 Episcopal Church of Our Savior, Manhattan

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:

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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

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dee, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee, Clifford Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Rest in Peace - Michael Day

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.

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| Birthdays (this past week): | Jasmine Thatcher and Beverly L. Tas |
| Birthdays (this coming week): | Grant Ferris, Rebecca Foote and Andrew V. Hall |
| Acolytes: | October 23: Team 1 October 30: Team 2 (Russell) |
| Altar Guild: | October 23: Team III October 30: Team I |
| 8 a.m. Readers: | October 23: Lucille Ogden and Thomas Finnigan October 30: Debbie Belding and Lynne Koch |
| 10 a.m. Readers: | October 23: Regina Ardini and Justin Bohlmann October 30: Wilma Tully and Bobbie Wells |
| Ushers: | October 23: Bill and Regina Ardini October 30: Patty Drake and Pat Keeffe |
| Pledge Clerks: | October 23: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell October 30: Joanne Lown and Charlessa Thatcher |
| Parish Cycle of Prayer: | October 23: Kathleen Craft, Charlotte DeGross, Sue DeLorenzo October 30: Ann Dingee, Sue Dingee, Chris, Sue and Sara Dingee |
| Coffee Hour Hosts: | October 23: Brian Rance, Saira Shahani October 30: Barbara Slegel and the Choir |

This Week's Lectionary

Jeremiah 14:7-10,19-22

Psalm 84:1-6

2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18

Luke 18:9-14

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 362 Holy, Holy Holy! Lord God Almighty!

Sequence: 517 How lovely is thy dwelling place

Offertory: 495 Hail, thou once despised Jesus!

Communion: LEVAS 62 In Christ there is no east or west

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Recessional: 368 Holy Father, great Creator

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

Sermon Preached on
Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost
(October 16, 2016)

"Stick-to-it-Tivity"

There is an apocryphal story about Walt Disney that I was reading the other day: Essentially it says that he was a failed cartoonist. Everyone told him he had no talent, but he kept at it. Eventually, he was asked to do some work at a church, and while working out of a shed by the church, he spotted a mouse and began to draw it. Yes, Mickey Mouse was a church mouse.

Only, it wasn't true. He was already a fairly well known cartoonist when he came up with Mickey. Nevertheless, his story did involve some determination and persistence in the face of adversity - and this became a theme of his movies. If you work hard and don't give up, you will come out on top - or at least respected - in the end. In one of his less famous movies, "So Dear To My Heart" he even had a song about persistence called "Stick-To-It-Ivity."

Stick-To-It-Ivity. The belief that with enough hard work and belief in yourself, you can do anything. It sounds so cheery, so positive, so Disney. That's not bad as far as it goes. You might even look to today's scriptures as examples of Stick-To-It-Ivity. I mean... Jacob wrestling all night with God and prevailing? That's persistence!

And especially the gospel where you have the woman not giving up in the face of an unjust judge. When he ignored her pleas for justice, she kept at him - she wore him down until he gave in.

But is that really the lesson of today's scriptures? Pester God until he gives you what you want? Of course not.

If we look at the parable of the woman and the judge, we notice that there are two players. The woman, who is persistence in her belief that her cause is just. And the judge who doesn't care. Jesus tells the disciples to be like the woman. But he also suggests that the judge is nothing like OUR judge who is God. He tells them to keep moving forward in their trust of God - that they can and must trust - even if it feels like they can't. God is nothing like that judge. God does care for us.

So Jesus tells them that persistence isn't so much in pestering God but in trusting that God loves us.

It's just that sometimes it doesn't feel like it. You and I both know it. You know that there are billions of people living in poverty on this planet - many of them literally starving to death.

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Persistence is not going to change their stories. Even in our affluent country, even in our faith, there are times when trusting God difficult. We see churches close and statistics showing that fewer and fewer believe in God. Civil discourse seems to be disappearing. There are pressures on all sides demanding our attention.

How can we, like that woman in the gospel, persevere in trusting?

This is nothing new. Why do you think Jesus told this parable to the disciples in the first place? Because he was going to be leaving them on their own soon, and he knew it would not be easy. Unlike a Disney movie, there were not going to be any feel-good endings for most of them. Even after the resurrection - which was pretty feel-good, wasn't it? - but even after that, their lives would become increasingly difficult with people turning their backs and mocking them, with prison, torture, and death.

How could they persevere? The only answer they could have - the only answer that can sustain us today - is that God loves them. Jesus encouraged them to pray always. He said that prayer - losing yourself in the presence of God - gives the motivation to keep moving ahead. You cannot persist without being fed, and Jesus tells them that the slings and arrows of the world will be too much if they do not continually remember why they are preaching the gospel. It's not for money. It's not for fame. It's not so people will feel good about them. It's because God's love is eternal and brings a peace that does not depend on anything outside.

Jesus uses this little parable not to suggest that they just have to work hard and believe in themselves. He uses it to remind them that while the world does not care about them, God will always be there. All they have to do is make the connection. To pray always and not lose heart. Justice, Peace, Joy - they will all come in God's time. It's hard to see in this world, Jesus knows, but with the ability to lose yourself in God's love, we can see it. And we can persevere. Amen.