

St. James' E-pistle

October 7, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I mentioned last Sunday that I had been to a conference talking about embedding scripture into our everyday lives. Why is this important?

Well, think about it. If we truly believe that every aspect of our lives is a moment of contact with God, then we need to be trained to recognize God in action, especially through each other. We need to be able to see God pretty much in every person, every situation, every feeling.

One of the best ways to teach us and focus us on God is through scripture. No, it's not a guide book that tells us exactly what to do in every situation. Yes, it is filled with contradictions and confusing ideas. That's part of its power.

Because what scripture can do is open us up to the presence of God. Its greatest power is as a record of our struggle with our faith through the ages. Abraham struggled with how he fit into a relationship with God. So did Isaac and Jacob. So did Sarah, Rebecca and Leah and Rachel.

We see the same struggles in the prophets (think of Jonah refusing to prophesy, or Jeremiah complaining to God that it was useless, or Amos arguing that he was just a farmer). We see the same struggles in the New Testament with followers who disagree on what they understood Jesus to mean - even as they heard the same thing! That's why there are four gospels instead of one.

When we engage with that same struggle, we are joining with those who went before - and it's in that wrestling that we come to see the face of God more fully.

THAT's why I like the idea of embedding scripture in everything we do. That's why we have weekly Bible study each Thursday. That's why I recommended last Sunday that you actually bring a bible to church on Sundays. That's also why I want to try a few new things over the next many months.

The first, and simplest thing I would like to do is make a collection of your favorite bible passages. **Send me your favorite verses (1-3 verses for each passage if possible).** Seriously. Tell me why that passage has meaning for you. You can send me as many as you want. Once I've got a good-sized collection of them, I'll move on to a couple of little projects I've had in mind. One of those is to print and frame several of those passages to display in the Parish House. Another is to put together a booklet of those verses - and perhaps a brief description of how that passages speaks today.

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No one thing will make us a biblically literate - which we as Christians need to be - but seeing it everywhere, having opportunities daily to reflect on scripture brings us to not only more knowledge but more openness to God's action in the world. Ultimately, that awareness and understanding of God is at the root of our faith.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Join Us for the
St. Francis
Blessing of the Animals



Sunday, October 9
10:00 AM

St. James' Episcopal Church
4526 Albany Post Road
Outdoors in our Meditation Garden*

Everyone is Welcome! Bring Your Pets!

*Please dress warmly

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Receiving Donations for SPCA: As a partner of the Humane Society of the United States, the DCSPCA has been asked to take an EMERGENCY transfer of animals from the evacuation areas in the south due to Hurricane Matthew. They are asking for anything you are able to donate to help them with this influx of animals. Please bring any donations to the Parish Hall this Sunday and members of the Sunday School will deliver them to the animals!

Graveyard Tours Start: The Tours are finally here! The Tours begin tonight. Please take some fliers and share them. Put a picture of the flier on your Facebook page (or other social media). Give people Graveyard Tour business cards. Make this event known to everyone you know.

Remember, these Graveyard Tours are not only our biggest parish fundraiser of the year, they are also evangelical outreach - because as they share the stories of past members, they also share their struggle with living out the Gospel. It's a winner all around.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer: Deacon David and Carol Bender are participating in the annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk on Sunday, October 16, 2016. They would appreciate your financial support. You can donate by going to the link below. Just copy and paste it into your browser.

http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR?px=26375449&pg=personal&fr_id=77386&s_locale=en_US&et=fmPFj65jVXw6fWk46dBSVQ

Troop 80 BBQ Chicken Dinner: Boy Scout Troop 80, which St. James' sponsors, is holding a BBQ Chicken Dinner on Saturday, October 15. It is take-out only. Because its timing conflicts with the Graveyard Tours, customers will pick up their chicken at the United Methodist Church between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. All tickets must be purchased in advance. If you'd like a ticket, please see Bill Fenwick (or any other scout from Troop 80).

Acolyte Festival: Save the date - Saturday, October 22 - for the Diocesan Youth Acolyte Festival! It's a full day of mostly meeting other youth, learning a few tricks of the trade, and in general having a great time. We're looking for all youth and a few adults to make the trip.

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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.

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>

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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.)

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."

October

- 9 St. Peter's Church, Lithgow, Millbrook
Also: Jewish Holy Day: Yom Kippur
- 10 St. Thomas' Church, New Windson
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF ST. JAMES' CHURCH!
- 11 St. Margaret's Church, Longwood, Bronx
- 12 Canons Committee of Diocesan Convention
- 13 St. Luke's Church, Beacon
- 14 Order of the Holy Cross
- 15 St. Francis & St. Martha's Church, White Plains

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.

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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

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

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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 (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson (brother of Mary Gabel), John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, 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):	Aaron Burkhardt, Justin Bohlmann, Ann Dingee and Robin L. Bohlmann
Birthdays (this coming week):	Peter Matranga, Dot Craft and Sharon O'Brien
Acolytes:	October 9: Team 2 (John) October 16: Team 3
Altar Guild:	October 9: Team II October 16: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	October 9: Lucille Ogden and Sue DeLorenzo October 16: Debbie Belding and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	October 9: Donna Beyer and Deirdre Mae Micker October 16: Patty Caswell and Maggie McNamara
Ushers:	October 9: Donna and John Beyer October 16: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne
Pledge Clerks:	October 9: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass

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October 16: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

Parish Cycle of Prayer: October 9: Clarence, Joann, Anna and Catherine Clark, Rich, Leighton, Alix, Sophia and Eden Ciferri

October 16: Donna Coffman-Tracy, Gwen Cookingham

Coffee Hour Hosts: October 9: Jodi Triola, Patty Glancey

October 16: Deirdre Mae Micker, The Urban-Meads

This Week's Lectionary

Jeremiah 22:13–16
Galatians 6:14–18
Matthew 11:25–30
Psalm 148:7–14

This Week's Hymns

405 All Things Bright and Beautiful
383 Fairest Lord Jesus
416 For the Beauty of the Earth
118 LEVAS Spirit Song
344 Lord Dismiss Us

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

Sermon Preached on
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
(October 2, 2016)

"Results May Vary (And That's Okay)"

My friend Steve writes wonderful haiku, and he wrote one about this Sunday's gospel that goes like this:

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Faith is our day job
Don't throw mountains in the sea
Just preach, love, and serve.

Faith is our job. It isn't something that drops down on you from above.

This kind of reminded me of the famous American writer Kurt Vonnegut, author of *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Cat's Cradle*, among others. I went to a lecture by him many years ago - and someone asked how he got his inspiration to write all those books. He said, "Inspiration? I had six kids to feed!" Then he said he didn't sit around waiting to be inspired. He just started writing because he needed to get something to the editor if he wanted to keep eating. Sometimes it was garbage, and sometimes it was good. It didn't matter - he just kept writing.

That's pretty much our Gospel today. The disciples are freaking out about what Jesus has asked them to do, so they cry, "Increase our faith!"

Jesus says to them, "Look, you don't need more faith. Even a tiny amount is enough to do wonders. What you need is to get off your bottoms and start acting."

Excuse me? We don't need more faith?

Let's go back to my friend's haiku.

Faith is our job. It's not something you get. It's what you do.

That's why Jesus tells that little parable about the slave who prepares the meal for the master at the end of the day. It's their job.

And faith is ours. If we wait around to receive faith or to have more of it - to have enough faith... If we wait until we're good enough or ready enough or smart enough... If we wait until we can guarantee we're not going to make a mess of things, then we will never get going.

That doesn't mean we don't study, plan and think things through. But it does mean we don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

For the record, I can pretty much guarantee you will never do anything perfectly. Sometimes you'll do okay, sometimes you'll hit a home run, sometimes everything you touch will be an unmitigated disaster. Results may vary, and that's okay.

We are taught that in seminary almost from the first day: don't expect to be Mr. Holy. You're no holier than the next guy in the pew, and you never will be. There's even one of the Articles of Religion (in the historical documents section of your prayer book - give it a look some day) that says essentially, if you refuse to receive communion from a priest because they're a bum

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priest, you're missing the point of communion. It doesn't depend on the priest's holiness but on you just coming forward to receive Christ.

That was what my friend was saying. You have enough faith already to do what you need to do. You may not do it well, but you've got enough to get going. And it is our job to get going.

Let's just pause a moment to think about what it is we need to do.

Maybe it's starting a new adult education program or a bible study, but we're waiting for the conditions to be just right, or we're afraid not enough people will attend. Maybe it's a prayer discipline - you think maybe you should pray more but aren't feeling it or don't know what you're supposed to feel or are afraid you'll do it wrong. Maybe it's some social action but you fear nothing will come of it.

If you had bibles with you right now, I'd ask you to turn just a few verses back to see what it was that Jesus had asked the disciples to do that made them cry, "Increase our faith!" Was it to perform miracles? Raise the dead, heal the sick, feed the poor? Was it to preach the gospel?

No. The impossible task was to forgive people who had hurt them. He says there is evil all around, and there always will be. But to be a person of faith - to do our job - it requires that we just go out and forgive. We can't wait till it feels right - it never will. We can't wait till they're sorry. We can't worry if they'll accept forgiveness - results will vary. We just need to know that Faith is our job, and that includes forgiving others as we are forgiven.

One of the points of the gospel today is that Christ asks us to do difficult things, and sometimes the most difficult aren't grand gestures like throwing mountains into the sea. Sometimes, the hardest things are saying "You are a beloved child of God, and I forgive you."

The other point is that we don't wait for perfect conditions or inspiration or until we can guarantee a good result. We do it because it's our job.

Faith is our day job.

Don't throw mountains in the sea.

Just preach, love, and serve. Amen.