

# St. James' E-pistle

## October 9, 2015

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

There's a joke about St. James' back in the "good old days." One day, the Vestry noticed there was a budget deficit. So they looked around the table and said, "Whose turn is it to bail us out this month?"

Those were the days when St. James' served as the spiritual home for many of the country's wealthiest people. They simply pulled out their checkbooks and covered the costs. The rest of the parish - the regular Joe's - did not have to worry about supporting the church financially. When push came to shove, it would be all covered.

Needless to say, those days are over, and like many, we often struggle to pay our bills. Every time I see red ink, I silently cry to heaven, "Why can't we have just a few multimillionaires? Just five or six maybe."

Probably the reason we don't is because it would be a bad idea. Not that we don't welcome wealthy parishioners. ALL God's children belong here regardless of economic means. And I have seen wealthy parishioners use their gifts to achieve great good in the world.

Rather, what would be a bad idea is to depend on those few who have great wealth (as we were once rumored to have done), to keep the church afloat. There is danger in depending on the few, and I would like to list just a few of its pitfalls.

**1 Financial giving to the church is all about our participation in the Kingdom.** We are not passengers on a cruise ship sitting and watching the ocean float by. We are the crew, we are the people who make the Kingdom alive on this earth. If we depend on others to sail the sea (or climb the mountain, or walk the trail) for us, it may happen, but we will be poorer for it. The same is true for our financial giving. It is one way we participate in the life of the church. Sure, we could sit back and let others do it, but then we're not really "all in."

**2 Financial giving is an act of Thanksgiving.** At the 8:00 AM service, at the blessing of the offering, we all say, "All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee." At 10:00 AM, I also bless the offering with these words: "Bless, O Lord, these gifts, presented by your people as a thanksgiving for the gifts you have given us." God blesses us in many ways, and we offer thanks in many ways, but one of them is to lift up a portion of

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what has given us and do something good with it. Letting go of a portion of what we have reminds us that it is God who gives to us, that we can depend on God, and that we are grateful.

3 **It's not really fair to depend on a few.** In the parable of the widow's mite, Jesus compares the poor woman who gives her all to the rich man who, while giving much more money to the temple, is only giving a small percentage of his vast wealth. This is true. God wants all of us, not just a little bit - and that is true whether we have a lot or a little. Again, God wants us "all in." Having said that, it can seem awfully tiring if, every time something needs done, everybody looks at you. Nobody wants to be seen as a human piggy bank. We as a parish, understand that we all have gifts to give, and if we are to remain healthy, it will have to be with everyone's participation, with everyone doing what they can. Yes, those with great wealth are called to give in greater measure, as God has given them - and many find it a great blessing to be able to share their blessings. But they are not called upon to do it all by themselves.

4 **It is risky to depend on just a few people.** Quick story of how I started my journey to St. James'. Six months after arriving at my first church as a rector down in North Carolina, one of our parishioners died. A nice man, unassuming, helpful and kind, I was honored to officiate at his burial. A few days later, however, the wardens and treasurer met with me and said, in effect, "He was a third of our budget. He died without a will. Without his money, we can't pay you." That was a bit of a shock, since we were just settling into the place. For the next two years, I worked with the parish and the diocese to help the congregation see that it could indeed continue its ministry, that they did have the resources if they pulled together. At the same time and on advice of the bishop, I was also searching for a new parish. One day, the treasurer came in with great excitement to say that people had readjusted their priorities, and that we could indeed afford a full-time priest. By that time, however, I had accepted the call the St. James'.

The lesson, however, is that to depend on one person (or just a few) is never safe in the long run. Inevitably, it will lead to difficulty. And that doesn't take into account the rare wealthy person who will hold their money over the congregation and threaten to withhold it if the church doesn't do things their way.

5 **Endowments are a mixed blessing.** Endowments aren't wealthy individuals, it's true. But sometimes we depend on them in the same way. In a newspaper article about the endowment St. James' received in the 1950s, Fr. Kidd noted that some people wanted to quit giving to the church now that there was a large endowment. He put a quick stop to that kind of thinking, and rightly so. Endowments can help advance a ministry, but they have very real limitations. Their availability depends on the health of the stock market (as we painfully saw in 2008). They are impersonal, removing participation and a sense of thanksgiving. Laws governing their use allow for only a small percentage to be spent - the

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amount we have available any given year helps but doesn't come anywhere near covering the costs of building upkeep. Endowments are a tool, but that's all.

The upshot from all this is that no healthy parish will depend on the wealthy few to fund the ministry of the church. Such a church's ministry would be shallow and fragile. For us, in order for this to truly be a ministry of the entire Body of Christ in Hyde Park, we need to all be part of it. Surely, some of us have greater wealth than others, more opportunity to give more. That is all to the good. But even the poorest among us can give of themselves in some way - remember the widow's mite. It is the invitation to be part of it, to be "all in," to live a life of thanksgiving that drives us to give.

We are approaching the season of pledge drives. As we talk more about pledging, rejoice. It means that you are part of it all.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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### **The News of the Church**

**Get Your Parish Directory:** The new Parish Directory has been printed and will be available for distribution this Sunday. We ask that you take only one copy per family.

One photo and one corrected birthday did arrive in time for printing. Not to worry! There's space to add information, and we will constantly update the master copy so that future printings will have all the most current information.

**GRAVEYARD TOUR TICKETS ARE ON SALE:** Be sure to purchase your Graveyard Tour tickets by visiting our website: [www.stjameshydepark.org](http://www.stjameshydepark.org). Encourage your friends, colleagues and families to get their tickets, too! We hope that sending people directly to the church's website will make the purchasing process easier.

**Stewardship Meeting, Tuesday, October 13:** St. James' is hosting a Stewardship Meeting to form a year-round Stewardship Committee. We will take a new look at the concept of Stewardship. The meeting is at 7:00 at the Chapel.

**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!

**Reading Program Gets Go-Ahead:** It looks like we have a tentative start date of **October 15th** for our revived Reading Adventures at North Park Elementary School. The plan is to start with the kids at 3:30 pm and finish by 4:30. Would you like to be a Reading Adventures volunteer? Please see Anna Marie Pitcher or Fr. Chuck. Please be aware that the Diocese of New York now requires an online training on sexual abuse prevention for volunteers who work with children. Please see Fr. Chuck about that.

**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.

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**Tables for you:** 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.

**WEEDERS WANTED:** Thank you to everyone who volunteered to take a garden or path assignment for weeding in an effort to "put our best foot forward." We still need 3 or 4 more volunteers. You will choose a garden or path to adopt and be responsible for its weeding and upkeep throughout the year. You will be able to work on it on your own schedule (There will be no designated work days, just whenever it fits in with you.) It probably should only need your attention three or four times a year (if that). Bring a friend. If you can help fill that schedule, please call Sue DeLorenzo at 266-3196 or Carol Vinehall at 849-1914. We'd really appreciate your help. Thanks again.

**Get Your Coffee Hour On!** Would you like to clear out your cupboard of cookies? Feel like baking a cake or a sheet of brownies? Find a good 'buy one, get one free' deal on baked goods at stop n shop? If you can donate some goodies and place them on the table in the parish hall before church, you too can be a coffee hour volunteer-- that's all it takes! So please, fill up all those empty slots thru December on the clipboard in the narthex & we'll handle the rest. P.S. Of course, if you feel called to get more involved, just ask Saira or any other coffee team member how you can help!

**Looking Ahead to Thanksgiving Dinner:** Even though we still have much to do in October, plans are being made for Thanksgiving. The Community of Hyde Park - including churches, chamber of commerce, schools and other organizations are teaming up to host a community-wide Thanksgiving Dinner at the New York State Park Headquarters in Staatsburg. The dinner will be on Sunday, **November 22 at 5:30 PM**. There will be a ticket price, though there will also be many tickets available for those who cannot afford it.

St. James' has been asked to bake between 20 and 30 apple pies for the dinner. I'm still waiting to hear how the supplies will be provided, but our main concern right now is getting a few bakers who are willing to bake - we can do it either at homes or all together at the church. 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.

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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.

**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! There's a registration form in this E-pistle - print it and bring it in. 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.diocesenyn.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

- 11 Grace Church, Hastings-on-Hudson
- 12 The Church of St. Simon the Cyrenian, New Rochelle
- 13 St. Luke's Church, Somers
- 14 On the feast day for Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, we pray for all whose ministries began in this diocese and were called to other lands.
- 15 St. Paul's Church, Yonkers
- 16 St. Peter's Church, Lithgow, Millbrook
- 17 St. Andrew's Chapel, Montgomery

### **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:

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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, 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 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):	Robin Bohlmann and Peter Matranga
Birthdays (next week):	Dot Craft, Sharon O'Brien and Jasmine Thatcher
Acolytes:	October 11: Nancy Montero, Kirstin Horn and Deirdre Mae Micker October 18: Russell Urban-Mead, John Beyer and Anna Clark
Altar Guild:	October 11: Team Number II October 18: Team Number II
8 a.m. Readers:	October 11: Angela Henry and Grant Ferris October 18: Deb Belding and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	October 11: Donna Beyer and Bobbie Wells October 18: Patty Caswell and Justin Bohlmann
Ushers:	October 11: Donna and John Beyer October 18: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne
Pledge Clerks:	October 11: Paul Littlefield

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October 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

Parish Cycle of Prayer: October 11: Kathleen Craft, Charlotte DeGroff and Sue DeLorenzo  
October 18: Ann Dingee, Sue Dingee and Chris, Sue and Sara Dingee

Coffee Hour Hosts: October 11: Jodi Triola, Ross & Connie Eames and Pat Rooney  
October 18: Deirdre Mae Micker, Brian Rance and the Urban-Meads

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

Job 23:1-9, 16-17

Psalm 22:1-15

Hebrews 4:12-16

Mark 10:17-31

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  
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
(October 4, 2015)

"Like a Child"

I am glad to be back after our little trip last week. I heard the Canon Person had a great time with you all last week.

I also heard that she loved this window of Jesus with the children. In fact, she took a picture of it and posted it on Facebook. She loved the diversity in it - I've heard a lot of people over the years comment about this window.

And what's not to love? This is one of the nicest scenes in the bible - Jesus letting all the kids come to him, gathering them up in his arms and blessing them. So sweet.

In terms of reading today's gospel passage, getting to the little children is also kind of a relief after all that unpleasant talk of divorce. I heard one preacher say that the lectionary puts the "little children" passage in with the divorce passage so we can have something nice to talk about and skip over the unpleasant things.

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This sort of surprised me because being a child in Jesus' wasn't particularly pleasant, either. And in case they hadn't noticed, children are affected by divorce, too - just as much back then as today.

Let's take a quick peek at divorce before we talk about what Jesus might have meant when he said we need to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child."

Divorce was, of course, a pretty one-sided affair. If a man was sick of his wife for whatever reason, he could write her a certificate of divorce and send her away. Usually, this meant going back to her family in disgrace, but sometimes it meant homelessness (if she had no home to go back to or if they would not take her back).

Women were essentially property, given by the father to the husband. Jesus changes the entire concept of marriage into something more than a business contract. It is a relationship of love. The woman is more than property. The two are one. They are not only equals but equally essential to each other.

Now we get to the children. Because if women were seen as property, children were lower. In fact, they were nothing, at least legally speaking. And by that, I mean they had no rights and no place in society. Parents could even kill disobedient children. Childhood was hard and dangerous and...something to survive.

So when Jesus says we must receive the kingdom of God as a little child, what's he talking about? Well, in a sense, children haven't changed that much since his day. How we treat kids has, but they haven't. Children are first and foremost trusting of their adults. They have to be because there is so much in the big hard world that is beyond their control.

That means you can make a lot of mistakes as a parent, and they will stick with you anyway. I remember several years ago when we took a trip to England, and I had to do the driving - on the wrong side of the road, of course. At one point one of the boys said something to the effect of, "Help! I'm in a car with a madman driver who's going to get us killed!" Yet the next time we had to drive somewhere, he dutifully hopped in.

They do this because they trust that we will - in the end, no matter how messy things are - get them to a safe place. They trust us when we are poor, when we are in the midst of horrendous circumstances like war or drought. They trust us when we are too hard on them or even when we are abusive.

I think it's not a mistake that this passage of "little children" is placed side by side with the passage from Job - because if ever there was a book in the bible that makes God look like an abusive parent, this is it. God and Satan have a bet that Job will curse God if life gets too hard. So they put him through literal hell to see if he'll crack.

In fairness, this book is supposed to teach us not to judge people when bad things happen to them (which was the practice - if you're poor or sick, you deserve it). This book is supposed to teach that bad things happen to us all, and God loves us just the same. And in the end, even if God seems pretty cruel in the process, God will get us to the joyful end.

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I would argue this says more about US than about God. In the time in which Job was written, people were seen as nothing when compared to God. People didn't see God as our Father yet, but they saw people as just as weak and vulnerable nothings who nevertheless should trust God. So when Jesus says to receive the kingdom of God like little children, was he saying, "You have to be weak, vulnerable nothings?" The fact that he took them in his arms and blessed them says there's more to it than that.

Just as Jesus changed the nature of marriage in the previous paragraphs, so he is changing in this passage the nature of childhood from one of nothingness to one of value - of being loved. This little picture-window passage says this: all of us are children of God. All of us are equally loved by God, and all of us can trust God to bring us safely home.

But there's another thing about childhood, not to be lost on us in this passage. To be God's child means to learn. To learn God's ways and to learn our place in that kingdom. Children are inveterate learners - even if they claim to hate school. They are learning all the time - and they are always watching you, the adult, to learn how to navigate this world.

I always tell parents in baptism classes that they have to be careful what they say and do at all times because the kids are always - always - watching them. That's how they learn. In the same way, we go to church so we can be around the people of God and learn how to be God's children. Always learning.

There is one more thing about kids. Their default understanding of family is that they belong. They don't think about what they have to do to belong to the family. They just do. We adults spend a lot of time trying to beat that out of kids. We talk about "deserving" what they get. I often get into arguments about "participation trophies" which are simply mementoes of playing on a team. Others say such mementoes should be earned or deserved by beating the other teams. I suppose that depends on if you're teaching the kids about play. Is its goal is to beat others or to simply enjoy playing? That's like life: are we teaching them that we have to deserve God's love or just enjoy it?

Jesus says come - come to the kingdom of God - as a little child. One who understands his or her own weakness. One who sticks with their Parents through hard times. One who trusts God even when that trust may not seem to make sense. One who learns endlessly. And one who knows - absolutely - that they belong and that they are loved.

Receiving the kingdom like a little child is not a sweet nothing. It is everything. Amen.

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2015 - 2016 SUNDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION FORM

Child's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name Child Prefers to be called \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Entering \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Full Address \_\_\_\_\_

(If parents live apart, please give address at which the child lives most of the time and indicate which parent is at that address.)

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ May we send e-mail notices to you? Yes / No

Has your child attended St. James Sunday School before? Yes / No

Are you members of the church? Yes / No Has your child been baptized? Yes / No

Will you be attending church while your child is in Sunday School? Yes / No

If not, emergency contact info:

At what phone can we reach you in case of emergency? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional emergency contact name \_\_\_\_\_

phone number \_\_\_\_\_

relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any restrictions/conditions your child has, or is there any information the teacher should know in order to make Sunday School a more positive experience for your child? Yes / No  
If yes, please explain.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, problems, suggestions you or your child might have regarding Sunday School.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_