

St. James' E-pistle

December 30, 2016

Pulpit Notes

"For Jesus came to wage sin's war; this Name of names for us he bore; rejoice, rejoice, with thanks embrace another year of grace."

Brothers and Sisters:

As you can guess, the above quote is not scripture. It's from a hymn.

In fact, it's the processional hymn for this Sunday. You'll like it. It's upbeat and joyful even as it pulls no punches about our need for God's salvation.

Most of all, though, it welcomes the new year as "another year of grace."

You might wonder if this last year has been a year of grace - after all, there have been a lot of hard knocks this year. Why, in the past two weeks alone, the celebrity world has lost Allan Thicke, George Michael, Carrie Fisher and only a day later her mother, Debbie Reynolds.

Add to that the very real and very consequential tragedies of Syria, South Sudan, Haiti, and many other war and/or natural disaster ravaged countries. Then, depending on your point of view, there were Brexit and our own chaotic election. And let us not forget the many terrorist attacks around the world.

So - aside from the Cubs winning the World Series - where was the grace?

Right where it's always been.

For Christians, grace is not dependent upon the external events of the world. Yes, we work as hard as we can to ensure justice, kindness, mercy and equity - that is a large part of our call as Christians - but grace does not depend upon these things being achieved.

According to the Catechism, "Grace is God's favor towards us, unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills." (p. 858). One way I like to look at it is that grace is God acting in our lives...and us being aware of it.

Either way you look at it, grace does not ensure all wrongs will be righted and all evil vanquished. It only ensures that God is working through us, that God loves us, forgives us, enlightens us, stirs us and strengthens us. In other words, Grace is the spark in the mind and the fire in the belly to go do the will of God.

Grace gives us the will, the strength and the courage to "wage sin's war" because we know that in God there is salvation, rest, and peace. This brings me to the part of this verse that reads:

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"this Name of names for us he bore." The name Jesus - Yeshuah in Aramaic and Yehoshuah in Hebrew - means roughly "God is salvation."

Our salvation is in the name of the Lord. That's why we have a Feast Day dedicated to that moment when Jesus received his name on the eighth day after his birth. It happens to be New Year's Day, too - which is why I love that hymn so much - it wraps the new year of grace with the Name of Jesus.

In his name, we are reminded that God is not only with us, but God is with us, filling us with courage, wisdom and power if only we will pause from our busy lives and pay attention.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Epiphany...
and the Band



An Epiphany Pageant

Friday, January 6, at 6:30 pm
All Welcome! - Free Admission

St. James' Episcopal Church
4525 Albany Post Road
Hyde Park, NY

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Signs! What a wonderful response to the "Love Your Neighbor" signs. Not only do we have one in front of the church and chapel, but they have been spotted around town. There was even one at the library.



Share your picture of your yard sign. Didn't get one? Not to worry because a new initiative to order bumper stickers with the same message is about to bear fruit. Even if you don't put bumper stickers on your car, you can get one for a friend (or just tape it to your window, as some do). This is the message of Christ, and we are called to get that message out. Let's do it!

Music Progress: We are now in negotiations with one candidate for the position of organist/choir director. While nothing has been formalized yet, we are very close and hope to make an announcement this week!

Fireside Chats Begin: The first Fireside Chat of the 2017 season will take place Thursday, January 12 at 7:00 PM at St. James' Chapel. The lecture is titled, "The History of the FDR

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Presidential Library." The speaker at the first Fireside Chat is Paul Sparrow, director of the FDR Library and Museum.

Men's Breakfast: The next monthly men's breakfast will take place on January 21 8:00 AM at Cranberry's!

ANNUAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT: Notice is hereby given of the Annual Meeting of St. James' Episcopal Church in Hyde Park on Sunday, January 22. The meeting will begin with Holy Eucharist at 9:00 AM and continue with light breakfast and business following the eucharist. At this meeting, we will not only receive reports from the various committees, but we will elect new Vestry members and honor a parishioner's service with the St. James' Medal. The meeting will be held in the Parish Hall.

Qualified Voters: In accordance with Parish Bylaws, eligible voters are "persons of the age of eighteen years or more belonging to the parish, who have been baptized and are regular attendants of its worship and contributors to its support for at least twelve months prior to an annual election or a special meeting of the corporation at which they are in attendance."

If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like to vote, you may request an absentee ballot no later than 10 days prior to the Annual Meeting.

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.

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!

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January 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 New Year's Day/Holy Name 11:30 Pageant Rehearsal	2	3 7 pm Pageant rehearsal	4 7 pm Pageant rehearsal	5 2 pm Pageant rehearsal	6 6:30 pm Epiphany Pageant	7
8	9	10	11	12 7 PM Fireside Chat	13	14
15	16 M L King Day	17	18	19	20	21 8 AM Men's Breakfast
22 9AM Joint Eucharist/Annual Meeting	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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The News of the Diocese

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

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.

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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, Dee, Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Charles Pardee, Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheekey, Naomi Sleight, Carl Smith, 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 week):	None
Birthdays (this coming week):	Betsy Eames, John Golden, Sanjana Shahani, Ryan Seagren and Chris Granados-Kramer
Acolytes:	January 1: Team 2 January 8: Team 3
Altar Guild:	January 1: Team II January 8: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	January 1: Lucille Ogden and Jim Smyth January 8: Debbie Belding and Thomas Finnigan
10 a.m. Readers:	January 1: Regina Ardini/Deirdre Mae Micker

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Ushers:	January 8: Donna Beyer/Bobbie Wells January 1: Bill and Regina Ardini January 8: Patty Drake, Bobbie Wells
Pledge Clerks:	January 1: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass January 8: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	January 1: Liz Granados, Chuck Kramer, Nick and Chris Granados-Kramer and Tom Greene January 8: TBA
Coffee Hour Hosts:	January 1: See Separate Schedule January 8: See Separate Schedule

This Week's Lectionary

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm 8

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:15-21

This Week's Hymns

250 (Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year)

94 (While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night)

115 (What Child Is This?)

"Meditation (Three Watercolors #2) by Gregory Hamilton

344 (Lord Dismiss Us With Your Blessing)

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

Sermon Preached on

Christmas

(December 25, 2016)

"Tuba Christmas: The Waiting Game"

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A few days ago, some friends sent me a video about Tuba Christmas. They wondered if I had ever heard of it.

Have I ever heard of it?!

It's only the biggest thing in the tuba world. Every year, thousands of tuba players gather in cities all over the country to play the same Christmas carols.

Many of them decorate their tubas with garland - and even lights. [pull out tuba with lights]

And they always play [play on tuba] "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." And sometimes they play carols that are less familiar but carols nonetheless - like "On This Day Earth Shall Ring." Yeah, and they always throw in a little "Jingle Bells."

So, have I heard of it? I have been wanting to go to Tuba Christmas for over 40 years. And I'm still waiting because somehow, I just never was able to get to it.

It's a good thing Tuba Christmas is at Christmas time because this is a season of waiting, isn't it?

You have to wait each week to light an advent candle. You have to wait in line after line with all those people when you go Christmas shopping. And you have to wait till morning to open your presents!

But that's what we do. We wait. We wait each year for Jesus Christ to be born, to come be with us - to come be one of us.

This got me wondering... Did you ever think about how much waiting Jesus has to do? I mean, he's the Son of God, right? All powerful, all-knowing - and then he decides to become human like us - and to do it the same way as us! That means waiting 9 months just to be born! Then he has to wait, what, 8 or 9 more months to begin walking. And then two or three more years before he can start really talking.

And then he has to go to school and do chores and obey his earthly parents - and all along, he's the son of God, just waiting to do what he came to do.

Why do you think Jesus put up with all that waiting?

Let me toss out a couple of guesses. First of all, when you're God, I imagine a few years - even a few decades - doesn't seem all that long.

Second, God wanted to be one of us. God needed us to know that God really knows what we're going through down here. Pain? Hunger? Sleepiness? Weakness? Anger? Jesus understands all that and promises not to hold it against us.

And third, God knew that we needed to see, feel, touch, hear him. God knew the time was right - that we had grown up enough to understand that what we're really waiting for won't come in this lifetime. And so, when Jesus came, he could show us - really show us - the way to the Kingdom of God. And the way he showed wasn't with money or power or fame or strength. It was love and kindness and caring that he came to show us.

Now, if you want a world where everyone is always loving and kind and caring, you'll be waiting a long time. Then again, I've been waiting to play in Tuba Christmas for a long time, and I continue to wait in hope.

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But you know what? The thing about Christmas is that it's not all about everything being perfect. It's all about God being with us both in good and bad. And we don't have to wait for that at all because Christ Is Born. God is with us right now.

Now do you think that's something worth celebrating? Do you think it's maybe worth sharing? Maybe even singing about? So, join me in the hymnal with hymn 99.

[Play and sing "Go Tell It On the Mountain"] See what we just did? Not only did we go tell it on the mountain, but we just had our own Tuba Christmas.