

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

Pulpit Notes

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law - indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

--Romans 8:6-7

Brothers and Sisters:

The last couple of weeks have been tremendously busy with the Trinity Institute, the Reparations presentation and the Fireside Chat.

Last Sunday, I promised I would provide a link to the lectures and panel discussions of the Trinity Institute - as well as the theater presentations and phenomenal music. Just follow this link, and you'll have access to most of this year's programming as well as the various speakers from previous Trinity Institutes. <https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/videos/education>

I mentioned earlier that one of the major threats to humanity is water, but that the biggest causes of water injustice is our self-centeredness and focus on, in St. Paul's words, "the flesh."

From the days of trying to watering holes as one's own to seeing the river as one's own private dumping ground to bottling and selling it in plastic, most of what harms us stems from this greed. Indeed, "To set the mind on the flesh is death."

We saw the same thing in the Reparations presentation where it became clear that the abomination of slavery and subsequent Jim Crow/segregation/discrimination had their roots in love of money and a desire for superiority.

In both water and slavery, we find ourselves commodifying what God has given us to love - the earth and each other.

But scripture teaches us over and over that to focus on the pocketbook over the earth (which God has made us stewards of) or over each other is death, and it can never please God. We know this in our hearts, but it's awfully hard to remember it when it's our pocketbooks that are affected, especially if we are living on precarious ground financially.

I don't suspect it will ever be easy. Back in the days of slavery, good Christian folks often struggled with slavery's morality. Many inherited slaves and then found it rather costly to set them free (there were legal fees, and then there was lost "productivity"), so despite uneasiness about it, they kept slaves imprisoned.

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St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

While it's not for us to judge them, it is for us to take a lesson from them as well as from those who contributed to the destruction of the environment for a profit. The lesson we take is that if our primary job given by God is to be stewards of both our world and our neighbors, then focusing on the flesh (our flesh, to be precise) will not accomplish God's purposes.

In Lent, we recognize the degree to which we are still focused on the flesh, then repent - that is, seek to retrain our focus on Christ and follow him where he leads. We can only do this if we are honest with ourselves. So I encourage you to look within, see where you are, and then (as my GPS says) recalculate your route. When we are willing to do that, there is always hope.

By the way, with that hope and renewed focus, we can achieve remarkable things. Francis Perkins, for example, followed the lead Christ gave her and worked tirelessly to bring our country to a place where we care for our oldest, sickest and weakest citizens. Not a bad example for all of us.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

The News of the Church

Troop 80 Pancake Supper: Troop 80 is having another fundraiser for Sea Base High Adventure participants. The Pancake Breakfast is **April 8 from 8:00 to 11:00 AM** in the Parish Hall. \$8.00 per adult and \$6.00 per child.

Graveyard Tour Committee Openings: You know how powerful the Graveyard Tours have been for St. James'. They have been fun, educational, and inspirational not only for the congregation but for the whole community. Not only that, but they have been extraordinarily helpful to the parish budget.

The Graveyard Tour Committee has openings for positions, and if you want to keep this remarkable ministry going strong, now is your time to step forward. Now is the time to listen to God's call to see if this is where you are meant to be. If you believe in the power of the Graveyard Tours to increase the work of St. James', contact either Fr. Chuck or Bobbie Wells.

Women of St. James' Invited to Grace: Grace Episcopal Church in Millbrook, NY is inviting the women of our church and others in the Dutchess County area to a special gathering and meal on **Wednesday, May 10, beginning at 6 p.m.** The speaker, Pam Mott, Canon to the Ordinary, from the Western Massachusetts diocese, will speak about "The Challenges Facing the Episcopal Church Today" and the role of women of faith in meeting those challenges. This event will give us an opportunity to meet other Episcopal Church women, learn about the issues in which we all are engaged and discuss and share ideas together.

Continuing Women of Grace's tradition of pot luck dinners, they will provide the entry and, once they have an idea of the numbers attending, will ask for your contribution of appetizers, salads, desserts or beverages.

Please respond to Patty Glancey at pglancey@ymail.com no later than **Monday, April 24th**, so we can call Grace Church with the total number of women attending from our church. Grace Church's Parish House, the site of this event, is located at 3328 Franklin Avenue, Millbrook, NY.

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

April 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2	3 8 AM Morning Prayer 10 AM Morning Prayer Office Closed	4 10 AM Morning Prayer	5 10 AM Morning Prayer 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	6 10 AM Morning Prayer 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures 7 PM Fireside Chat	7 10 AM Morning Prayer	8
9 Palm Sunday	10 Office Closed	11	12 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	13 Maundy Thursday 11 AM Bible Study 7 PM Maundy Thursday Liturgy	14 <u>Good Friday</u> 10 AM Community Walk of Cross 7 PM Good Friday Liturgy	15 8 AM Men's Breakfast 8 PM Easter Vigil
16 <u>Easter Sunday</u>	17 Office Closed	18 7 PM Vestry	19 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	20 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	21	22
23	24 Office Closed	25	26 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	27 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	28	29 10 AM Nursery School Tag Sale

Explore the Choir! "If you have any interest at all in singing and/or playing an instrument - no matter how much experience you have - do consider participating in the St. James music ministry! You can contact St. James' Music Director Sarah Rodeo (sarodeo@vassar.edu) at any time!"

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

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.

Spiritual / Educational Online Resources 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)
 - Fr. Richard Rohr's blog <https://cac.org/richard-rohr/richard-rohr-ofm/>
 - 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."

- 2 Church of St. Mary-in-the-Highlands, Cold Spring
- 3 Church of the Incarnation, Manhattan
- 4 Christ Church & St. Stephen's, Manhattan
- 5 St. Thomas Choir School, Manhattan
- 6 Church Periodical Club
- 7 Parish Administrators and Secretaries of the Diocese
- 8 The Diocesan Investment Trust

Praying For Peace Everywhere:

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

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.

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

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

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, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), 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, Sharon Secor (recovering from heart surgery), James Sheeky, 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 past week):	Jack Kinne, Joann B. Clark, Leighann Ciferri and Douglas Belding
Birthdays (this coming week):	Kathleen Craft, Susan McGlynn, Susan Heupler and Carol Vinall
Acolytes:	April 2: Team 3 April 9: Team 1
Altar Guild:	April 2: Team II April 9: TBA
8 a.m. Readers:	April 2: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris April 9: Lucille Ogden and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	April 2: Patty Caswell/Justin Bohlmann April 9: Regina Ardini/Mike Fenwick
Ushers:	April 2: Dean Caswell, Audrey Horne April 9: Bill and Regina Ardini

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

Pledge Clerks:	April 2: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright April 9: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	April 2: Tom, Maggie and Amelia McNamara, Deidre Mae Micker April 9: Mike, Annette, Mike and Gage Minter, Nancy Montero
Coffee Hour Hosts:	April 2: Lenten Breakfast April 9: Lenten Breakfast

This Week's Lectionary

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm 130

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45

This Week's Hymns

Processional: Hymn 148

Sequence: Hymn 666 (Out of the Depths I Call)

Offertory: "I Am The Bread of Life"

Communion: Hymn 324

Recessional: Hymn 151

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

Sermon Preached on
Fourth Sunday in Lent
(March 26, 2017)

"Right Sight, Light"

On Tuesday, the clergy of the region spent the day with Bishop Dietsche discussing pressing issues of the diocese: Among the biggest topics were refugees (we are in the midst of the worst refugee crisis of people fleeing violence since World War II), while wealthy nations sit on their

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

hands. We also discussed Sanctuary for undocumented residents - or other ways to show Christ's love and care, which I preached about just a couple weeks ago.

The rest of this week was spent at the Trinity Institute (well, in the Wilks Room and Parish Hall, where we were a partner simulcast site): there we learned about several major water issues facing the world today: pollution, commodification of water with resulting unjust distribution of water, climate change (with its resulting drought and flooding often in the same places), and rising sea levels, to name a few.

Now, if it weren't for the news, you may be wholly unaware of any of these things going on - because our part of the world is one of the least affected. We aren't an island nation that has about a decade before it's completely under water. We aren't among the billion people who have no access to drinkable water, we really haven't experienced serious drought. At most, we have milder winters, which many are finding hard to complain about.

In short: we don't see what's going on. And maybe don't want to. Which is something the scriptures have been talking about for a very long time.

One of my favorite stories about not seeing what's right in front of you is today's gospel. There you have the beggar, blind from birth, who is miraculously healed by Jesus. In healing the man, Jesus teaches that poverty or sickness are not things people deserve, as some believed at the time (and many still believe).

But the main point is that this healing takes place on the Sabbath, that Jesus had the gall to heal someone on the Sabbath. The fact that an unprecedented miracle took place, that a man received his sight, was completely lost on the leadership. But then, by this time, most of the leaders had already decided they hated Jesus and were looking for any excuse to condemn him. They couldn't see the work of God done before their very eyes because they could only see a man they hated.

Ironically, the blind man is left to point this out: at first he just tells bystanders what happened. He was blind and now he sees. When they bring him in for questioning, he recognizes that Jesus must be a prophet. When they bring him in a second time, he chides the council for not seeing that Jesus must clearly be a man of God, even though they, of all people, should be able to get it. Finally, facing Jesus, he proclaims what he has seen - "Lord, I believe!"

For much of humanity's history, we have not seen as God sees. As Samuel said, God sees with the heart; we see outward appearance. God sees with the heart; we see with power. God sees with the heart; we see with dollar signs. God sees with the heart; we see only our own little circle, and as long as we're taken care of, that's all that matters.

I caught myself slipping into that peculiar blindness at the Trinity Institute when an expert was showing maps of sea level rise over the next seventy years. Two things ran through my head: First, even though a third of the world's population will be under water by 2080 (including a chunk of Manhattan), the MidHudson Valley won't be. Second, I'll be dead before it gets too bad, so no big deal. See what I did? In the blink of an eye, I went from caring priest to self-

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

centered person neglecting both those who are being affected right now and future generations who will pay for the sins of their forebears.

This is all very depressing. But that's okay - after all, it's Lent.

More importantly, we are people of faith, of hope, of love. The Pharisees (which is just John's catch-all word for leadership) couldn't see because they felt their power and position were threatened. But when we keep our eyes on Christ - who is the Light of the world - we CAN see what's important. In fact, getting our heads out of our own self-centeredness and refocusing on the Light will always help us see that nothing is hopeless. Ever.

We trust - always - that the Lord is our shepherd and that even though we walk through the shadow of the valley of what surely can seem like death - he is with us, and so we shall fear no evil.

Now, the focus of the past few days has been water and climate, and it's impossible to discuss in a sermon all the ways we can act on that one issue. And yet, next month there is a climate march in Washington to draw attention to this serious issue. I know of many Episcopalians going - and at least one parishioner if not more. It may not seem like much, but as St. Paul says, we are children of the light, and it is our job to expose the works of darkness.

This is true whether the issue before us is water justice or refugee justice or care for the sick and poor or the stranger in our midst - or acknowledging our own need for God's loving embrace because what we need is not found online or in the seats of power.

Whatever it is, we are called upon - today - to expose the darkness, to refocus on Christ, let Christ heal our blindness, to walk toward the light, and yes, to be light. Amen

Sermon Preached on Third Sunday in Lent (March 19, 2017)

"A Different Kind of Thirst"

When I teach pre-baptism classes, one of the first things I have participants do is think of as many bible stories as they can that have water in them. Go ahead, try it. You probably got Noah, the parting of the Red Sea, Jesus walking on water...

These two stories rarely pop up.

Why? (Aside from people not knowing bible all that well)

One guess is because what these folks in the bible experience isn't our experience.

We don't live in a desert, we're not wandering nomads, and we don't have to go to a well outside of town to get our water.

Now, how about if I had said to think of stories with THIRST in them - would you have thought about these? Maybe, but still our experience of thirst is not theirs. When we say we're thirsty,

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

we just get a cup or open a bottle (hopefully reusable, right?). We don't really know what it's like to chronically need water and not have it. Praise God, we don't know what it's like to ache with parched mouth wondering if we will survive the day. Most of us here don't know what it's like to be on the edge between life and death every day.

To be sure, there are millions of people today who do, but we are thankfully not among that number. (That's what River at Risk was all about. That's what Water Justice is all about, & I hope you'll be part of that this week). Perhaps a moment of gratitude to God for that bit of remarkable good fortune - for having such easy access to potable water - is in order.... (Silence) So, we don't know what it's to have this unquenched thirst, this ache, this need for something that just is not within our grasp.

Or do we?

Despite our being fairly comfortable physically, the whole point of these scripture stories is that they do speak to us in the depths of our humanity, that they say something universal despite differences in time, culture, gender. These stories speak to something deeper, more essential to our very human nature. And when it's missing, you DO feel like someone in a desert desperate for even a drop of cool, clear water.

Look again at today's stories: in Exodus, the people of God are grumbling - again. Yes, they're thirsty. It's the desert. But they have been grumbling every blessed step of the way. The Egyptians are going to kill us, the animals are going to kill us, why did you go up to that mountain and abandon us, why did you give us all these rules, we're hungry, we're thirsty.

It didn't matter what their situation was, they were going to complain. Or to put it another way, they could not and would not be satisfied. With anything. Ever.

Their problem wasn't with their surroundings. It was their souls.

They were looking for physical solutions to a spiritual problem. Everything could be solved with stuff. Which of course it couldn't. What was missing was not stuff. What was missing was any sense of trust, any sense of relationship with God. As a people, they thought of God as a means to an end rather than the goal. But until they changed that sense of relationship - until they brought God in - nothing would change them.

The woman at the well was a little different. She was at the well all by herself - rather than together with the other women of the village who would normally all go out to get water at the same time for safety and community - because she was some sort of outcast. We learn that she had had some marital issues, and in that day and age, this was enough to leave her on the outside. Actually, even today, even here, we demonize people who don't conform to what we think of as normal, so we really can't feel too superior. But the point is that this woman was missing a lot more than just the water she was hauling. She was missing a sense of belonging, a sense of being acceptable, a sense of security, maybe a sense of even having any value as a human being.

Which is why the water Jesus offered her was far more than mere liquid. Jesus offered her the water that never runs dry - that fills the soul so that regardless of your physical surroundings or

St. James' E-pistle

March 31, 2017

situation, you are at peace, content, joyful. He offered her what others could not - God's eternal and unconditional love, a sense of belonging no matter what, elimination of the shame place on her by her community, and a promise to never leave.

Take another moment to think about your own life. What do you thirst for?

A lot of the time, you can't quite place it. You know something's missing. Maybe it's been missing all your life, and all you know is that you've never quite had what you need deep down. You know that the physical just can't fill you - whether it's food or possessions or position of power - there's something else missing, and you've never known what it's like to be truly satisfied inside. [Maybe this is affecting how you relate with others, and you find yourself at odds with everyone around you or intolerant of their differences. Not just disagreeing but despising. If that's the case, something is missing & you might need the same water as that Samaritan woman]

If that's you, then you're in luck. This is the season for looking within, for stopping and noting that water is all around, that there is a rock nearby just waiting to be tapped, that there is a man at the well who has something to offer. Now is the season to look within at our own thirst and say, "Please sir, give me that water." Amen.