

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: July 9, 2017

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Bible Verse

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."

- Matthew 11:25

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Many years ago, when the boys were little, we sometimes had them in the pews during church - this was generally during the summer. The evening after one of those occasions, I was giving one of the boys a bath and said something that did not please him. He challenged me with, "...but in your sermon, you said..."

In that moment, he caught me in an inconsistency, and it led to a really positive conversation for both of us. But the bigger lesson for me was that he was listening. And almost immediately, he saw a real-world application for what he heard. That was a revelation. Up till then, I suspected that the boys were getting very little out of church. We (well, Liz) brought them, and they played with their action figures throughout most of the service. But something was getting through. The words, the prayers, the worship were getting through at a level I neither understand nor need to.

But it IS important to know that things ARE getting through. Important things. Valuable things like empathy, trust, grace, forgiveness, love. What's more, this has led, over the years, to many other significant conversations sparked by something that happened at church. This is one reason I believe it is important for kids to be in church. This is where they can be in a different sort of environment than they get everywhere else. It's where they can step away from their electronics with all the social media and games, but also where they can step away from the countless structured activities we throw at them. Sure, church is structured, but it's structured in such a way that kids can fly under the radar - picking up the things they need and ignoring the rest.

I recently read some other church's newsletter and saw their reasons for kids being in church. They are:

- 1 Worshiping as a community is the central activity of the church
- 2 It provides kids AND adults with valuable intergenerational experience
- 3 Kids need quiet time and joyful praise time
- 4 Children absorb more than adults often realize.

All this is a way of saying that Summer is a time of vacation, travel, relaxing, hanging out and sleeping in - I totally get that. But don't sell it short for what it can mean to your kids (down the road) to sit next to you in church. During the school year, the kids are usually off at Sunday School (which we value highly!) - there's little time to just sit and worship, or even learn how to worship. Summer is the time for that. It's the time for you and your kids to be together in church. It's an opportunity for you to hear the same words together and, after church, maybe for conversations that start with, "...but what about that prayer today?" Or "...but what about that sermon?"

You might just think of church in the summer as an extra tough time to drag the kids out of bed. But it just might provide you with an opportunity for some of your richest conversations.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

Did you know?

...how many Eucharistic prayers there are? Last week we talked about the two different Eucharistic Prayers in Rite I. You might be more familiar with those of Rite II - at least if you attend the 10:00 AM Eucharist. There are four Rite II prayers: Prayer A, B, C, and D. We are currently using B during the summer, but A is by far the most regularly used prayer at St. James'.

Prayer A is similar to the Rite I Eucharistic prayer. It is, however, not as heavily penitential in tone.

Prayer B is incarnational in tone. ("For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary..."). Great for use in Advent.

Prayer C is different in that it has more congregational response. It is focused on creation. While beautiful, it is sometimes called the "Star Wars" prayer for its language ("the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home.")

Prayer D is one of the most ancient, most widely used prayers in the world, appropriate for solemn occasions (often for Baptisms and Maundy Thursday). However, it has a drawback - it provides no place for the Proper Preface.

Next week, the Proper Preface.

Announcements

STARTING SUNDAY! Summer Adult Forum:

The Summer Adult Forum will begin on Sunday, July 9 - 9:15 AM in the Wilkes Room. They will run every Sunday through August 20. This series of quickie classes will focus on the Sacraments. What are they? Why do we have them? What does each one mean? Who can take part in them? There will be seven sessions since there are seven sacraments. You can attend one, two or all of these sessions - each session works independently of the others. The first class is: Baptism.

Women's Dinner/Men's Breakfast:

The women of the parish will gather for their monthly meeting at Antonella's on Monday, July 10 at 6:00 PM. The parish men will have their monthly breakfast on Saturday, July 15 at Cranberry's at 8:00 AM. Hope to see you there!

Episcopalians In The Park:

Come to an Episcopalian Celebration! The Church of the Resurrection in Hopewell Junction is teaming up with St. Luke's and St. Andrew's in Beacon on Saturday, July 29 for "Episcopalians In The Park." It is a way for Episcopalians all over the area to get to know each other better, and to have some fun and (of course) food! This day where we celebrate being Episcopalians takes place on the large grounds of St. Luke's in Beacon from 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM. If you are a musician, they're looking for folks from all over to get together and make beautiful music.

As the organizers say, "This is really to get to know each other and have a wonderful day being Episcopalians. If we really know each other, maybe we can also join in on some service projects together, or help each other out in other ways. You never know where the Spirit might lead us - together."

Please let Fr. Chuck know if you are interested - we'll have a sign-up sheet going around over the next several Sundays so we can RSVP.

So save the date! July 29. And join us!

| July 2017 | | | | | | |
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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| 9 | 10 Office Closed 6PM Women's Group | 11 | 12 10 AM Morning Prayer | 13 11 AM Bible Study | 14 | 15 8 AM Men's Breakfast |
| 16 | 17 Office Closed | 18 7 PM Vestry | 19 10 AM Morning Prayer | 20 11 AM Bible Study | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 Office Closed | 25 | 26 10 AM Morning Prayer | 27 11 AM Bible Study | 28 | 29 Episcopal Celebration |
| <p>Sundays:</p> <p>Holy Eucharist Rite I is at 8:00 AM</p> <p>Holy Eucharist Rite II (with music) is at 10:00 AM. Sunday School and nursery are available at 10:00 AM.</p> | | | | | | |

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 <https://www.diocesen.org/administration/for-clergy/liturgical-and-sacramental/diocesan-calendar-of-intercession/>

- 9 The Diocesan Budget and Finance Committee
- 10 Diocesan Deputies to General Convention

- 11 Christ Church of Ramapo, Suffern
- 12 St. Peter's Church, Lithgow
- 13 St. Andrew's Church, Beacon
- 14 The Diocesan Chief of Finance and Operations
- 15 Grace Church (City Island), Bronx

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, Cath Holywell (priest in the Church of England and Indaba partner who worshiped with St. James' - undergoing heart surgery), Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, 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, Patricia (sister of Barbara Slegel), Carl Smith, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Safe travel for the Scouts of Troop #80 (sponsored by St. James') as they begin their high adventure camp at sea.

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 all right.

Birthdays (this past week): Brooke Schroder, Liz Handman and Paul Littlefield

Birthdays (this coming week): Judith H. Douglass, Eden Ciferri, Nancy Montero and Taylor Triola

Acolytes: July 9: Team 2
July 16: Team 3

Altar Guild: July 9: Team II
July 16: Team III

8 a.m. Readers: July 9: Debbie Belding and Thomas Finnigan
July 16: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch

10 a.m. Readers: July 9: Russell Urban-Mead and Justin Bohlmann

Ushers: July 16: Wilma Tully and Bobbie Wells
July 9: Bill and Regina Ardini
July 16: Patty Drake, Bobbie Wells

Pledge Clerks: July 9: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright
July 16: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

Parish Cycle of Prayer: July 9: Randy and Barbara Soden, Marguerite Spratt, Gully Stanford
July 16: Audrey Stenger, Anna Mae Swenson, Bev Tas

Coffee Hour Hosts: July 9: Summer Schedule--No Coffee Hour
July 16: Summer Schedule--No Coffee Hour

This Week's Lectionary

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67
Song of Solomon 2:8-13
Romans 7:15-25a
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

This Week's Hymns

Processional: The God of Abraham Praise ('82 #401)
Sequence: What a Friend We Have in Jesus (LEVAS #109)
Offertory: "Come Unto Him, All Ye that Labor"
Communion: 'Tis the Gift to be Simple ('82 #554)
Recessional: Christ the Worker (#611)

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (July 2)

Discipleship of Sacrifice

This is the Fourth of July weekend, so it's inevitable that we should think about the sacrifices of those patriots who fought to create this country. And it's right that we do so.

Of course, being Anglican (the children of the Church of England), we might want to consider the sacrifices on ALL sides because many Anglicans were loyalists, and many of them lost not only lives, but whole loyalist families lost their homes and indeed their country - they had to flee to Canada or even England. For what it's worth, that included nearly all the clergy, many of whom were lynched.

No matter what side you're on, it's worth remembering that sacrifice is the word of the day when you talk of war.

Which is appropriate, because in this series we're doing on discipleship, Sacrifice is the topic of the day. That's because there is a Discipleship of Sacrifice. Just look through the scriptures, and you'll see example after example of sacrifices made in order to obey God's call. The biggest of these sacrifices is, of course, the crucifixion and Jesus' call for us to pick up our crosses and follow him.

Even today when he tells the disciples that anyone who receives a prophet for the sake of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward... that should raise alarm bells for the disciples because many of the most famous prophets were executed. Just sayin'!

And of course the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis is a pretty dramatic and violent sort of sacrifice. You might be thinking that to be a disciple means to sacrifice a lot.

You'd be right.

But sacrifice is not always physical, not always violent. I would argue that the most important sacrifices are NOT physical but internal - spiritual. And again, our scriptures today point to these kind of sacrifices - though you may have to go a bit beyond the surface to see it.

Let's focus on Abraham and Isaac. If you were her thirteen years ago, you will remember that I went on a sabbatical to study and write about just this story. The story always intrigued me in part because when I was in Sunday School we put on a play about it for the church, and I got to be - yup - Isaac. It was very dramatic, and at the end, I asked my sister how she liked it and she said... "Nobody could hear you."

Anyway, in seminary, I stumbled onto Jewish midrash - which is a sort of ancient commentary held in high esteem. It said something very different about Abraham and Isaac than what I had been taught. You know the story: Abraham was so faithful that he would do anything God said, even kill his own son.

This story had never made sense. There's no real precedent for God commanding someone to kill their child. Not only is it unChristin, it's unJewish. Besides, time and time again, Abraham had given up so much in order to follow God - including the banishment of his first son Ishmael - why was another loyalty test necessary? I want you to re-read the story which isn't really that long. You'll see that a lot doesn't stack up.

That midrash I read also said it didn't add up. In fact, it suggested that God wasn't ordering Abraham to specifically kill Isaac. Rather, Abraham wanted to kill him because there was something wrong with Isaac.

It doesn't say what was wrong - but history is replete with stories of parents rejecting their children for perceived flaws. Or for that fact, Brothers and Sisters and friends rejecting each other for perceived flaws, whether physical, social, or political. Just this week someone sent me a video about being gay - and what it's like to be rejected by one's family and one's church. Is it so outrageous to think that Abraham would be like the rest of us?

Anyway, in a society where the appearance of strength was everything, if something was wrong with Isaac - who was supposed to become the leader - Abraham might easily have wanted to do away with him.

That's what I wrote about on my sabbatical - Abraham wanting to kill his son, and the sacrifice God really wanted. Can you imagine the conversation between God and Abraham on that mountain after Abraham lowered the knife?

What if God said something like this: "The sacrifice I want from you is your image of the perfect child. The sacrifice I want from you is your image of the perfect household where everyone is in awe of you - that's what you've been chasing after - your own greatness. And that leaves little room for me. The sacrifice I want from you is your own pride, your ego, your arrogance. With those in the way, you can never truly love me. The sacrifice I want from you is your trust. Trust me that I can lead your household even with someone you think is utterly unfit. Because I am with you always."

That's how I imagined the conversation more than a dozen years ago. That's how at least some Jewish scholars imagined it nearly 2,000 years ago. The greatest sacrifice is not life and limb - though those sacrifices should never ever be taken lightly. But the greatest sacrifice is within - it is to let go of our egos and to trust God in all things, in dark and light.

When I was imagining that conversation between God and Abraham, God said, "This moment on Moriah will be known throughout the generations as the greatest test you ever faced. Not a test of whether you can kill -- anyone can do that -- but whether you can embrace life."

Perhaps that's why Jesus doesn't end his instructions today with the prophet's dubious reward. He ends it with the giving of a cup of water. Humble, simple, life giving. To live like that is the sacrifice of the disciple.

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