

St. James' E-pistle

August 21, 2015

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

This week, let's talk about money. Yes, I know, that's all churches ever do!

Except, we don't.

I certainly don't like to. I try to spend my time talking about Jesus and how he changed our relationship with God from one of fear to one of yearning, peace, and ridiculously unreasonable love. I prefer talking about the one who says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest."

These are the words I believe the world needs to hear and take to heart. That our striving is useless but our very beings have value beyond compare. That self-serving kills us while caring builds us up. That God calls us to come closer, not hold God at arms' length.

That's why I'm always encouraging you to be part of a bible study (I'll help you start one!). That's why I'm always encouraging attendance at church where we can be together in Common Prayer. That's why I am happy to find new ways to worship, study and learn with you, not to mention encourage you as we go out into the world to seek and serve Christ in everyone we meet.

But we are nevertheless in the world, and our world operates with money as the means to get things done. My favorite public radio station has three fund-drives a year where they talk to their listeners 24-hours a day until they raise their \$1 million goal. That's \$1 million per fund drive. They do not stop until they get what they need to keep going.

We ask you once a year with a letter and maybe a sermon. Then we try to encourage you to take part in fundraisers like the Graveyard Tours.

We may need a little more than that.

St. James' is running a deficit budget, which means our expenditures outweigh our income. We can't do that for very long. As we approach the beginning of the program year, I'll talk to you more about what it actually costs to not only keep our buildings running but to do the work Christ calls us to.

We cannot ask just a few families to carry the financial burden of being Christians in Hyde Park. We cannot assume that this church will always be here. At least two churches in our diocese - in our region - are preparing to close their doors forever.

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It is not because churches have lost their relevance or because people no longer believe in God that they close. It is more because those within lose a sense of the importance of what they do, and a sense of the power they have to do it. But bringing the Good News of Christ – food for a hunger that no supermarket, no restaurant can ever satisfy - is possibly the most important work we can do.

For now, let me simply ask you to remember your current pledge. In the summer, people go places and let their pledge slide. It's common, but our slender financial reserves don't really allow for this. If you're behind on your pledge, please catch up. We'll talk more, but this would be a good, godly start.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Candle Prayer: Someone came to me this week asking about the candle prayer last Sunday. I was afraid they were going to say they had grown tired of it (Peace in the Holy Land is so far away), but they asked for a copy of it instead, so they could say it at home, too. I am delighted to print the prayer here so that you, too, can light a candle at home and pray. This prayer is said worldwide, across religions and is typically prayed on Fridays.

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 be light to each other

Let these candles be a lighthouse

To our spirit

Until we arrive at the

Sanctuary of Peace.

Amen.

Tour Guides and Crew Needed! We are almost there with our actors (see below) for the Graveyard Tours, but now we need tour guides and ground crews! In the past, we have had a small but dedicated crew doing this (especially crew). This year, we're looking for many more to be part of it. There will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex this Sunday - let us know you're interested! In the early part of September, we will have a training session or two for all tour guides.

Actors Needed: All but one role has at least one actor now! We need the following:

1 Rev. John McVickar - a younger man (mid-20s, early 30s would be ideal but can go older).

First rector of St. James'. **We have one actor for this role and need another!**

2 Catherine Carl - almost any age can work (20s - 90s. She lived a long time). Richard's daughter.

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3 Emma Victoria Pitkin Marshal - 50-70ish woman. Poetess of Hyde Park. **We have one actor for this role and need another!**

Rebuild the Churches Fund: Bishop Dietsche has asked each parish of our Diocese to join him in contributing to the rebuilding of the seven African-American churches that burned recently. We will hold this special collection on **Sunday, August 30th.**

Episcopal Relief and Development will be highlighted in September with a special collection honoring their 75th Anniversary celebration being held on **Sunday, September 27th.**

If you have any questions, please contact Joanne Lown or Deacon Gail. Thank you!

Got Oil? St. James' is a partner with the Dutchess County Interfaith Counsel which has an agreement with Love Efron Oil to reduce oil costs. Because of the collective size of the organization, we get a reduced rate for oil. We recently received word from Love Efron that they would now like to extend these discounts to all members, volunteers, and employees of the member churches. While this is undoubtedly an effort to attract new customers, discounts also apply to current customers.

We don't act as promoters of any business, but if this is something that can save you a little money because of your association with St. James', we are happy to be of use. I believe you need to contact Love Efron directly and mention your relationship with St. James'. If you do so, please contact Fr. Chuck to let him know how it works out.

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.

Pictures from the Garden: Below are scenes from our community garden and its work in the community.

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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."

- 23 Morningside House Chaplaincy, The Bronx
- 24 On the feast day for Saint Bartholomew the Apostle we pray for those engaged in the ministries of discipleship.
- 25 Rural and Migrant Ministries and those who work with migrant workers in the Diocese

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- 26 The Chaplaincy at Manhattanville College
27 On the feast day for Thomas Gallaudet with Henry Winter Syle we pray for those who work in ministries with the deaf and hearing impaired.
28 The Accessibility Committee of the Diocese
29 St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Chaplaincy, Manhattan

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.

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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

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim And Sharyn Burke, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jane Gagliardoto, 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, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

*Prayers of thanksgiving for the safe delivery on Sunday of Jeremy
Walter Johannes Burkhardt to Stephen and Chrissy Burkhardt.*

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): Samantha Heller, Christopher Santos and Timothy Slegel

Birthdays
(next week): Liz Van Wagner and Tess Manning

Acolytes:
August 23: Anna Clark
August 30: Deirdre Mae Micker

Altar Guild: August 23: Team Number I

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	August 30: Team Number II
8 a.m. Readers:	August 23: Deb Belding and Paul Littlefield August 30: Angela Henry and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	August 23: Donna Beyer and Maggie McNamara August 30: Patty Caswell and Sophie Ciferri
Ushers:	August 23: Donna and John Beyer August 30: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne
Pledge Clerks:	August 23: Doug Belding and Dean Caswell August 30: Paul Littlefield
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	August 23: Stephanie Porach, Evan, Todd and Stephen Weaver and Rebekah & Kwalik Ancrum August 30: Doug and Deb Belding, David and Carol Bender and John and Donna Beyer
Coffee Hour Hosts:	August 23: No Coffee Hour August 30: No Coffee Hour

This Week's Lectionary

1 Kings 8:1, 6, 10-11, 22-30, 41-43

Psalm 84

Ephesians 6:10-20

John 6:56-69

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

Sermon Preached on
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
(August 16, 2015)

"Simple Gifts?"

I've told you before that one of my favorite TV shows is The Big Bang Theory. One of my favorite episodes is the Christmas show when the attractive but relatively uneducated neighbor Penny

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buys super-physicist (but socially inept) Sheldon a Christmas gift. Sheldon is upset because this means he has to reciprocate with a gift of equivalent value - it is the implied social contract. And then he doesn't what that gift means about the relationship. Are they friends? Acquaintances? Something more?

For Sheldon, gifts are terrifying in the complications they bring into human interaction. He may be onto something.

Even simple gifts can complicate things, and boy, do they ever in today's scriptures.

When Solomon takes the throne after King David's death, God grants him a gift - anything he wants. Solomon doesn't choose wealth or power - just simple wisdom to guide his people well. A simple gift for God. And yet it proves to be tremendously complex for Solomon.

[We'll leave aside for today whether Solomon truly was wise - like his father before him, many have questioned his family and religious decisions - but in general, he was considered to be wise beyond his time.]

What is important, as Solomon found, is that wisdom can complicate you life - increasing responsibility. It's not simple. He had to deal with liars and matters of life and death, all the more so because of his reputation for giving wise solutions like the two women who each claimed a baby as their own. Taking that sword and offering to split the baby in half so each woman could have a half was classic - it made clear who the truly fit mother was.

And great leaders from other lands, like the Queen of Sheba, came to test his wisdom. That doesn't seem to be what he had in mind when he asked for the wisdom to guide his people.

It's even more complicated with the Gospel.

Jesus is the bread of the world, the bread of life given for us. It's so easy, so simple, just water and flour. But what it means! Not only feeding but converting, transforming, communing. Being part of it changes us and challenges us.

That's because taking part in this simple gift of bread and wine is a sign that you're in a relationship with God.

When I talk about sacraments to the confirmation class, you can watch their eyes glaze over when we memorize the catechism's answer: A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace. So, I generally say sacraments are like a kiss. There are a lot of different kisses just as there are a lot of different sacraments. There is the kiss of baptism which is like that first kiss of a new love - whether boyfriend/girlfriend or the new love a parent discovers with their newborn child. You never forget it.

Communion, on the other hand, is like those daily little kisses we give each other that don't seem like much at the time, but they mark and feed the love - and without them, the relationship would weaken.

So, with that bread of life, you're marking and feeding a unique relationship with God as revealed in Jesus Christ. It is a different kind of relationship than most, to be sure, but it is a relationship. And relationship always makes your life immensely more complicated. These simple little gifts, make everything harder. You're welcome.

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Oh, and if you don't believe me about it complicating things, think about it. Does marriage make your life easier? NO! Do children make your life easier? NO! What they do is put those people forever in your mind as they are never not there.

And it's the same when we eat bread of life, when you daily renew your relationship with God: everything you do is with God at least in the back of your mind. Like marriage or parenthood, there's no off button. That bread Jesus gives, which we receive weekly - or more - is like the daily kiss. It says, "I'm here, I'm part of you." Nothing is done without thinking of God at least a little.

Have you ever been away, say, on a business trip in a crowded conference room looking out at everyone, and you find yourself unconsciously looking for your husband or wife? Or whoever the one is who loves you. That's the way it is with God thanks to that simple gift of bread and wine.

Those little gifts, that bread, that wine, that wisdom, that daily kiss, will draw you deeper into your personal relationship with God and draw you out into the needs and desires of others near and far. They will challenge you not to merely give things from your abundance but to give yourself to others. But, receiving that bread and wine also challenges us to receive graciously the gifts others - often the very same people to whom we give ourselves.

And yet, If these gifts complicate your life, they enrich your life even more. Ask a married person if their life is easier, and they will say NO. Ask a parent if their life is easier, and they will say no. But ... Ask them if it's better - and that's a different story. We are relational people, and the bread we receive, reminds us not only that God cares for us but is a sign that we are in a loving relationship. It reminds us that in all the chaos, all the uncertainty and pain of the world, we are not going through it alone. We are never alone, never abandoned. When we look out into that crowded room, we will always be able to see the One who loves us.

It is no simple gift, this bread, this wine, this wisdom, this kiss - though it seems so at first. They are good, these gifts, and well worth receiving. But don't be fooled. There's nothing simple about them. Amen.