

St. James' E-pistle

August 26, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

The Fall is here. Seriously.

This Sunday, we have an End of Summer Picnic after the 10 AM service! We will have a good ol' time!

In two weeks, Sunday School starts.

Naturally, our community - and St. James' along with it - will observe the September 11 commemoration.

Then we have the Harvest Dinner on September 23.

And THEN, just to let us know Fall is in Full Swing, we have our Graveyard Tours. This year, we are trying new things including a new way for our tour guides are trained and how they will interact with people.

But some things do not change. While we have a full complement of guides, we DO need TRAILERS. What are Trailers? They are people who walk at the end of each tour making sure that everybody stays with the group. They also let the tour guide know when everyone is in place so each actor can begin their monologue.

In a way, Trailer is one of the easiest jobs in the world - no lines to learn, no routes to memorize or facts to share with anyone. Just walk at the back of the pack and make sure they stay with the group. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex of the church, so please sign up this Sunday!

Graveyard Tours begin October 7.

So, why do we do so much in the Fall?

Easy, that's when society's year begins. School starts back up. People return from their vacations. Organizations pick back up after a summer hiatus. It is our culture's rhythm.

And rhythm is important to life. The coming and going of our people is what makes us alive. We are constantly saying hello to new friends while bidding other loved ones' goodbye. None of us is here forever, and none of our endeavors is permanent.

We come, we go, we start things and we stop them.

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Our rhythm for starting things is the Fall. What will succeed? What will fail? We don't know. But we keep coming and going in the faith that God is with us through it all. Psalm 121 - has a verse that speaks to this:

The LORD shall watch over your going out and your coming in, *
from this time forth for evermore.

So - may the Lord watch over your going out and your coming in. May God bless our time of beginnings so that we as a Christian Community in the Episcopal Tradition, may walk with God humbly, faithfully, and full of hope.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Parish Picnic: **THIS SUNDAY!** Bring a dish to share - or just bring yourself! This Picnic is right after the 10:00 AM service - so we start cooking at around 11:30! We invite you, your family, and your friends to be part of this fun time.

Sunday School Registration Starting Soon! **September 11!** Get ready for BACK TO SCHOOL! Sunday School, that is. Registration for Sunday School this year will be on Sunday, September 11. The first day of classes is **Sunday, September 18**. Remember, we welcome - we encourage - everyone to come. Bring your friends! We want them. Bring your siblings! Bring anyone you know who you think could use a bit of God's love.

Harvest Roast Pork Dinner: A Fundraiser for the Community Garden. **September 23rd** from 5-7:30 p.m.. Adults are \$15, Children 10+ are \$10, Under 10 is Free. Call the Parish Office for reservations.

Graveyard Tour Fliers: Have you taken fliers and business cards for the Graveyard Tours? Please do so today, tomorrow or whenever you can! There are plenty for everyone in the narthex of the church - just waiting to spread the news of our Tours.

And remember, these Graveyard Tours are not only our biggest parish fundraiser of the year, they are also evangelical outreach - because as they share the stories of past members, they also share their struggle with living out the Gospel. It's a winner all around.

Acolyte Festival: Save the date - **Saturday, October 22** - for the Diocesan Youth Acolyte Festival! It's a full day of mostly meeting other youth, learning a few tricks of the trade, and in general having a great time. We're looking for all youth and a few adults to make the trip

Remember Your Pledge this Summer: Each summer we send out a reminder to keep the church in your sights during those long hot days. This is true not only for attendance and prayers but for pledging. Thanks!

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Join the 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.

Episcopal Election Toolkit Available: It is the official position of the Episcopal Church to encourage all eligible members to vote in every election. We see it not only as part of our civic duty but as part of our collective life of faith. If we are not engaged in the community, then we are withdrawn - which is not the example our Lord showed.

To encourage enthusiastic and informed participation in the election process, the Episcopal Church has published an Election "Toolkit" with information such as what representatives are up for election, who your officials are, and what the issues of the day are. It includes the Episcopal Church's official position on several issues, which may be helpful in your deliberations.

The most important thing in the church's eyes, however, is that we all go out and vote! Here's a link to the "Toolkit":

<http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal/EpiscopaliansVote>

Spiritual / educational websites to deepen your faith:

I have encouraged you to look at the following sites for spiritual inspiration. I should have also encouraged you to SHARE your own resources. And so, I am delighted to share three NEW RESOURCES that were brought to my attention by a parishioner (I didn't ask permission to share their name - otherwise, I would). I am presenting them with this parishioner's notes on what makes them so great. Enjoy!

1. The Rev. Suzanne Guthrie's weekly lectionary-based posting called "Edge of Enclosure":
<http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/>

I have subscribed to her blog so that her lectionary-based selections of fine art and quotations pulled from theological and literary sources are sent to my inbox every Monday.

Here is the one that came today: <http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/proper17c.html>

A favorite excerpt from her selections for Aug 22 include the following:

Since we ourselves are human beings, we must set before others the meal of kindness no matter why they need it – whether because they are widows, orphans, or exiles; or because they are brutalized by masters, crushed by rulers, dehumanized by tax-collectors, bloodied by

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robbers, or victimized by the insatiate greed of thieves, be it through confiscation of property or ship-wreck. All such people are equally deserving of mercy, and they look to us for their needs just as we look to God for ours. -Gregory of Nazianzus d.389

Oration¹⁴ On the Love of the Poor, quoted from J. Robert Wright, Readings for the Daily Office from the Early Church

2. The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook): a blend of inspirational memes, jaw-droppingly beautiful photos from the Celtic regions of the British Isles, and interesting links to smart and merciful posts from other sites.

3. Anne Lamott - also primarily via Facebook, though you can read many of her articles on Salon.com, and you can buy her books at any well-stocked book store. (Quoting from the wikipedia entry about her, Lamott's writings are "Marked by their self-deprecating humor and openness, [covering] such subjects as alcoholism, single-motherhood, depression, and Christianity.")

This was Anne's post on Aug 22:

"This is your conscience, artists and writers. You know that your conscience has tried in every possible subtle way to get you writing, drawing, singing, or dancing again, but you claim to be too busy, or too intent to begin as soon as....as soon as your child goes off to college, as soon as you retire, as soon as, as soon as. Both God and your conscience have given upon nuance and subtlety--therefore, this terrifying authoritarian figure has been summoned. He is pointing at YOU, you who wants to begin your memoir or novel, or join another choir or dance troupe. There is no such thing as "as soon as." As soon as means "never." "As soon as" means that someday you are going to DO regret having blown the invitation to create, to be an artist, to make marvelous music and messes and creations and gifts--gifts for you, and for us. It is part of our plan for world peace--"Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty." So get to it, okay? Today for one 30 minute pod, of scribbling, singing, gathering found objects from a stream or garden, for a collage. As this terrifying authoritarian figure frequently asks of me, "Deal?" "

So, add these resources to those listed below:

- 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).

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- Inward/Outward (daily meditations sent to your e-mail)

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."

August

- 28 Diocesan Budget and Finance Committee
- 29 St. Philip's Nursery School, Garrison
- 30 Resurrection Episcopal Day School, Manhattan
- 31 Grace Church, West Farms, Bronx

September

- 1 St. Stephen's Church, Armonk
- 2 Resolutions Committee of Diocesan Convention
- 3 Brotherhood of Saint Gregory

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

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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*

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dee, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson (brother of Mary Gabel), John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Please pray for the repose of Ann Smith.

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.

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| Birthdays (this past week): | Liz Granados, Scott Pitcher, Jeffrey E. Pardee and Christopher Santos |
| Birthdays (this coming week): | Laura Seagren, Annabeth Gausepohl and Patricia Caswell |
| Acolytes: | August 28: Bill Fenwick September 4: Nancy Montero |
| Altar Guild: | August 28: Team Number II September 4: Team Number III |
| 8 a.m. Readers: | August 28: Lucille Ogden and Grant Ferris September 4: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo |
| 10 a.m. Readers: | August 28: Patty Caswell and Wendy Urban-Mead September 4: Regina Ardini and Deirdre Mae Micker |
| Ushers: | August 28: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne September 4: Bill and Regina Ardini |
| Pledge Clerks: | August 28: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell September 4: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright |
| Parish Cycle of Prayer: | August 28: Stephanie Porach; Evan, Todd and Stephen Weaver September 4: Doug and Deb Belding; Carol and David Bender, John and Donna Beyer |
| Coffee Hour Hosts: | August 28: No Coffee Hour September 4: Audrey Horne |

This Week's Lectionary

Sirach 10:12-18

Psalm 112

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 14:1, 7-14

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

Sermon Preached on

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Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
(August 21, 2016)

"What Is Sabbath For?"

Yesterday, while I was at the Cathedral with a group from the parish, Liz & the boys were out running errands getting ready for them to go back to school tomorrow. They saw this new kosher deli we'd read about & decided to give it a try. It was closed, & when Liz told me about it I thought, "Oh yeah! It's Saturday - the Sabbath!"

Shows what I know. Their website says they're normally opened on Saturdays and closed on Sundays. Is it really kosher then? I don't know & frankly, it's not my business.

But it does make you wonder about the sabbath. What is it, really, and what is it for?

That's kind of at the heart of what's going on in today's gospel, so it's a good idea to know what the commandment about the sabbath says. In Exodus, we read:

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Sounds pretty clear. Don't do work, and don't make anyone else do work. Rest instead. But two questions pop up almost immediately: 1) What does it mean? How can I observe it faithfully if I don't know what "work" means? I need it spelled out because I might get it wrong. AND 2) How can I get around this?

People began clarifying the law about the sabbath pretty quickly, and we've been at it ever since.

Isaiah certainly tries:

*If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;
if you call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the Lord honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs...*

But then you ask, "What does it mean to pursue my own affairs?"

This is the background for what happened in today's gospel, where Jesus was teaching in the temple on the Sabbath when a woman who had been crippled by a spirit for 18 years, bent over and unable to stand up straight. Now, frankly, we don't know what caused this. Some have suggested that Jesus' healing miracles were all simply psychological. I don't think so, but that doesn't mean some could not be - and this could indeed be a psychological freeing. Look at what Jesus says: "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

Whether physical or psychological is irrelevant. He spoke a word, and she was healed.

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But was that *work*? Was that, in the words of Isaiah, "serving your own interests or pursuing your own affairs?" The leader of the synagogue thought so. Apparently, teaching is not work, but speaking a word of healing is. So he expended a lot of energy yelling at the crowd to go home and not to be healed on the sabbath.

Now, in fairness to him, observing the sabbath was important, and as a leader, he was accountable. Moreover, people tried to break the sabbath regularly so they could get an advantage financially over their competition or get those extra things done. There was always a sense that the sabbath was wasting work time. That's why they got so litigious, defining exactly what activity was considered work and what was acceptable, right down to how many steps you could go for your home.

But Jesus would have none of it. Not only here in the next chapter and in Matthew, Jesus reminds people that helping someone in need does not violate the spirit of sabbath. Freeing someone in bondage - whether physical or spiritual bondage - is an act of love, and there is no law against that.

Still, the sabbath is an issue because we effectively do not have one. Our society does not acknowledge an official sabbath, let alone what the sabbath was intended for, and we are pressured to fill up all our time with activity. Rest is for wimps.

We have to decide for ourselves if sabbath has meaning and if we will honor it ourselves regardless of what society says, and, if so, *how* we will honor it.

The great Sandy Koufax of the Dodgers in the 50s and 60s, was Jewish and did not play on the Sabbath. He even chose not to play in game one of the 1965 World Series because it fell on Yom Kippur. Sure, he got a lot of flack for it, but he didn't let it bother him.

What does our Christian Faith teach us about sabbath time? Jesus teaches that it is a gift. In Mark's gospel, he says the Sabbath was made for humanity, not the other way around. That is, it is designed to give rest, not to make life more stressful.

It is also designed to shift our focus away from worldly pursuits and onto God.

So ask yourself: Do you need rest? Do you need God?

If either of these, let alone both, are true, then you probably need the sabbath. Not as a law that you're going to try to work around anyway, but as the gift God has been trying to give all along. A time to step away from our manic pursuits, to guard us from the pressure to always be "on" and to let us sit with God.

Of course, I half suspect we fear that time with God, so we fill it up with all sorts of things we convince ourselves are "important."

Except that we eventually find out *one* thing is important: to love God and through our love for God, to love our neighbors. But to do that, we need rest and reflection time.

What is Sabbath for? It is for us so that we can be more human. So that we can, in fact, be Children of God. Amen.