

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I want to get ahead of something we all seem to dread but shouldn't.

Stewardship.

"No!" You scream. "Don't do it, Chuck! It's not even October yet! Don't talk about money!"

But I have my reasons. First of all, it's unavoidable given the lessons we've been having in the lectionary - especially the gospel and the readings from Amos. They make it impossible for us to look at our lives separate from our resources. We simply cannot turn a blind eye to the responsibilities and the possibilities that God places before us. Every time I think I can get away with it, the lectionary places Jesus' words right before my eyes.

Second, Stewardship isn't just about money. That's the whole point of the Gospel readings. It's not just about Time, Talent, and Treasure, either. It's about how we orient our lives. I know - in a month or so, we're going to be asking you to pledge money to the ministry of this church. It is right and good that we should do this. And not only pledge it but honor that pledge.

But Stewardship is all about whether or not God is at the center of our lives. Whether or not we see everything around us in relationship to God. Stewardship is looking at the environment and saying, "This is God's, and it has been placed in our care, and we will be accountable to God for how we care for it." Stewardship is looking at those struggling economically and saying, "These are our brothers and sisters, and if they struggle, we all struggle. What we have been given by God, we are called to share - and we will be accountable to God for how we care for them." Stewardship is looking at those who are oppressed and saying, "Those who suffer oppression are my family. If these are oppressed, we are all oppressed. The justice I enjoy in my position of privilege is what I am called to seek for others. And we will be accountable to God for the degree to which we shut our eyes to injustice." Stewardship is looking at those of other faiths or no faith and saying, "These also are God's children, and if we cannot agree, we are nevertheless called upon to seek the core of Christ in each other which is to love. And we will be accountable to God for the degree to which we seek that reconciliation."

Suddenly, giving money doesn't sound all that daunting, does it? But in all things, Stewardship assumes a degree of accountability to God. I don't know what that will look like,

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

but Jesus makes pretty clear that how we treat what has been entrusted to us will be discussed.

Frankly, even as I write this, I'm surprised I'm writing it. But it seems clear that if we live a life following Christ, it cannot be an unexamined life. Perhaps the biggest part of Stewardship, then, is mindfulness - paying attention to and acknowledging the decisions we make in reference to everything God has given us.

This leads me to the third reason for bringing up Stewardship. Our wonderful Stewardship Committee of last year is down to one member. Patty Glancey left the committee to take on an equally important ministry to which she felt God was calling her (and thus being a good steward of her skills). Janice Syedullah left because she feels she must leave the parish to be with her husband, Fr. Masud ibn Syedullah as he takes on a new position as the Vicar of St. Paul's in Tivoli (thus being a good steward of family).

Stewardship is not a ministry for one person. It is a ministry of the parish that needs leadership of a team. I would ask you to consider whether God is calling you to that ministry. It's not a job you take on without help. I am there to help. The Vestry is there to help. Resources are available that give great ideas.

The scriptures don't let us avoid Stewardship. Not in how we care for the world. Not in how we care for each other. Not in how we support the ministries placed in our care. So, I ask you to consider where you fit in, to think about what God has placed in your care and how you will respond.

It may not quite be Stewardship time at St. James', but truthfully, it is. Always.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

The News of the Church

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.

Our Outreach Committee has designated **Sunday, September 25** as **Episcopal Relief and Development Sunday**. As the mission arm of the Episcopal Church, we, as a parish community, will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider making a donation to support Episcopal Relief and Development's work. Special Offering envelopes will be provided. Cash or checks payable to St. James' Church/memo line: Episcopal Relief.

Graveyard Tour Fliers: 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.

Graveyard Tour Sponsors: In the past, we have invited sponsors to contribute toward the production of the Graveyard Tours. This year, we have begun to feature the sponsors on our Graveyard Tour web page. It helps us if parishioners and guests patronize our sponsors and let them know that they heard about them through the Graveyard Tours. The sponsor page will be up in a few days (NOT ready quite yet!). Check it out next week! And if you can think of anyone who might be a good sponsor, please let us know - or put the bug in their ear yourself!

Troop 80 BBQ Chicken Dinner: Boy Scout Troop 80, which St. James' sponsors, is holding a BBQ Chicken Dinner on **Saturday, October 15th**. It is take-out only. Because its timing conflicts with the Graveyard Tours, customers will pick up their chicken at the United Methodist Church between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. All tickets must be purchased in advance. If you'd like a ticket, please see Bill Fenwick (or any other scout from Troop 80).

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

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

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>

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

Spiritual / educational websites 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)

NEW RESOURCE

- 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."

September

- 25 Saint Thomas Church, Manhattan
- 26 St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Amenia Union
- 27 St. Luke's Church, Somers
- 28 Sunset Nursery School, Montrose
- 29 St. Michael's Church, Manhattan
- 30 The General Theological Seminary

October

- 1 Diocesan Deacons Committee

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.

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

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
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

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 note that each of Joann Clark, Gordon Mackenzie and Marguerite Spratt is recovering from surgery.

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): | Edith Kline, Thomas I. Finnigan, Kathy Graff, Stephen Gaulin, Laurel Ardini and William Holland |
| Birthdays (this coming week): | Stephen Burkhardt, Franklin Santos, Antoinette Horne, Austin Horne, Bryanna Burkhardt and Daniel Ogden |
| Acolytes: | September 25: TBA October 2: TBA |
| Altar Guild: | September 25: Team Number I October 2: Team Number II |
| 8 a.m. Readers: | September 25: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch |

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 10 a.m. Readers: | October 2: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris September 25: Patty Caswell and Andy Hall |
| Ushers: | October 2: Wilma Tully and Judy Douglass September 25: Andrew and Tanya Hall |
| Pledge Clerks: | October 2: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher September 25: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell |
| Parish Cycle of Prayer: | October 2: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright September 25: St. James' Church School, Caroline Canon |
| Coffee Hour Hosts: | October 2: Dean and Patty Caswell, Fred and Kathy Champion September 25: Saira Shahani and Brian Rance October 2: Audrey Horne |

This Week's Lectionary

Amos 6:1a,4-7

Psalm 146

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Luke 16:19-31

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

Sermon Preached on
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
(September 18, 2016)

"The Big Con"

There is a new book out called "The Confidence Game" by Maria Konnikova, a psychologist and contributor to The New Yorker.

I wish I could tell you that I read the book and found it fascinating, but that wouldn't be true. I didn't read the book at all. I heard an interview with her on the radio which piqued my interest, and then I read a review in The Atlantic.

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

The book is all about how some people can con other people and get away with it over and over again. One of her favorite cons was a guy named Victor Lustig who sold the Eiffel Tower - twice - and then, after becoming infamous for that, was still able to con Al Capone.

Capone's response was amusement because he knew Lustig was a liar and a cheat and still got sucked in.

There are many kinds of con games out there, and one of them is in our gospel reading today. To recap our story, there's a steward - sort of the business manager - who has been cooking the books. He gets discovered and fired, as you would expect. But then, he goes to the creditors and changes the amounts they owe! The idea isn't to make money at that moment, but to gain their confidence so that he can get things from them later. The people for whom he reduced their bills - even though it was his boss's money he was giving away - would now say, "Aww, he's a good guy, look what he did for me."

At the very least, these people were now primed to give him a loan or maybe a job, or even to let him live with them. This is a con. And the boss who fired him - like Al Capone - knew it was a con and still appreciated it!

Why? Because like Al Capone, he worked the same way. It's the way of the world.

There are a lot of cons, some much bigger than others, but according to Maria Konnikova, cons are going on all the time. Jesus knows it's the way of the world which is why he rather sarcastically - says, "make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes."

In other words, you can con your way through life in this world, but see how far it gets you in the next. That would be the big con - and you can't con God. God knows who you are at the deepest core. But we keep trying. Why?

Well, according to the book, there are three things that go into the character of a true con artist: 1) They don't empathize - or think at all about their victims. It sort of protects the con from worrying about how their actions affect others. Ruined lives mean nothing to them. 2). Narcissism. They know that they deserve what they're taking from you, so they are justified. 3) Since they clearly deserve to win the con, they believe that any means of getting what they want is okay.

These are, to a degree, also the things that we admire in the world. You can't be soft on others or they'll run you over, you have to be number one, you deserve it, and you do what it takes to get the job done.

Want some modern examples? The Epi-pen. Price jacked up beyond affordability simply because they could. Volkswagen and its emissions scam. Wells Fargo employees opening up ghost accounts to make it look like they were getting new business and therefore qualify for nice bonuses. (And the executive responsible for the mess? She was given a \$125 million severance package and praised by the CEO).

But as Jesus says, the world's ways are not God's ways. The prophet Amos addresses this in the Old Testament reading.

St. James' E-pistle

September 23, 2016

He says human nature - the world - is to trample the needy, to blame them for being poor, to ruin them and not care, to rip off your business partners at will. They even try to cut corners on the sabbath!

This is not what God wants. Throughout Old Testament and New, we see a basic pattern for God's will: that we love God and that we care for each other, especially the most vulnerable - the poor, the weak, the sick ... And you could add the depressed, the developmentally disabled, the imprisoned, and so on and so on. Anyone who is struggling.

The world sees them as a target. God sees them - and that's all of us at some time - as beloved children.

The world is full of cons. Often we get conned even when we know we are in the process of getting conned. But Jesus reminds us that we don't have to follow that path. He calls us to care, to serve, to keep our eyes on him so that he can lead us home - to our true home. And that's something no con-man can do. Amen.