

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: January 6, 2019

The Epiphany

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Happy New Year!

And more importantly, Happy Epiphany! This may not be a big marketing holiday, but for us Christians, the Epiphany is at the heart of what we are all about. Epiphany is the holy day when scripture reveals to us that God's love is not bound by national borders, not bound by physical appearance, not bound by religious tradition.

God's love is for all.

From this point on, all of Jesus' ministry is about opening the love of God, the relatedness of all humanity, to all of us. The only chosen people are people — all people. This may seem obvious if still elusive, but at the time, this was a revelation and a revolution. The idea that one group of people — specifically *our* people — aren't better than all other groups of people was humbling and exciting.

The idea that the wisest of all would recognize God in the Christ child was about more than simply acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God. It was acknowledging that all humanity belongs to the family of God, which therefore makes us responsible for each other.

This is the very beginning of Jesus' ministry in Matthew's gospel, even before his baptism. Good that it happens at the very beginning of the New Year, a time of resolutions and new beginnings for us. It's a chance for us to rededicate ourselves to opening our eyes, looking around the world and instead of seeing potential enemies or threats seeing cousins whom we may not quite understand but whom we can be sure are every bit as beloved of God as we ourselves.

It's also a good time to rededicate ourselves to the other priorities Jesus focused on during his earthly ministry. Forgiving those who have wronged us, healing those who are sick, feeding those who are hungry, reaching out to those who are alone, comforting those who are grieving AND carving out time each day to spend alone with God.

That's the gift of Epiphany. It's far enough removed from the hoopla of Christmas that we can actually pay attention to what God is saying. And what God says to us this holy day is that Christ came as God's Son (Gold) to help us embrace our relationship of love with God (Frankincense) by offering himself as a visible and physical sign of that love (Myrrh).

This message — for all the world — will always come not by force but by the gentle persuasion of one who desperately loves each person and respects the dignity all humanity.

So Happy Epiphany. May it be a bold and inspiring day for you and a door to a new and wonderful year.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

NOTICE: Worship Continues in the Parish Hall.

If You Have anything to add to the Epistle, please contact any of Fr. Chuck, Dyan in the Parish Office or Brian Rance. Thanks!

I Give Myself To God

We asked you to write down a few words about how you give yourself to God: Here is our first installment. Many thanks to Vince Asher for these wonderful words!

What does God's love do for me? It makes me more considerate of other people; in fact, it makes me respect all his creatures, too.

It leads me to empathize with those who are less fortunate than I am; it makes me appreciate what I have and encourages me to treat others kindly and be willing to share with them.

Announcements

EPIPHANY PAGEANT SATURDAY!

Our “Potluck Pageant” occurs on **Saturday, January 5 at 6:00 PM.**

If you signed up to come, thank you! If you didn’t get a chance to sign up, come anyway! Bring a dish to pass or just bring yourself. The more the merrier.

The Pageant portion of this evening — not long, but we hope enjoyable — will take place as we finish our meals. This is Divine Dinner Theater, so join in the fun and inspiration.

Mark Your Calendars: “I Want My Church to Grow”

Saturday, April 6 at 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

St. Paul’s Church, 161 Mansion Street, Poughkeepsie

This special training event is for:

- Laypeople and clergy who want to grow a vital church
- Those who want to join God in doing a new thing
- Leadership teams working on evangelism, church growth, spiritual development

Includes Workshops on:

- Evangelism 101: Using Community Organizing Tools for Church Growth
- We Need More Money: Best Practices for Your Stewardship Campaign

Inquirers Class

resumes on **January 8.**

Between The Service Classes Begin Again THIS Sunday:

We held off from our final class on the Creeds due to holiday scheduling, and we will have to hold off this week, too, due to a baptism. But **January 6** — the Epiphany — is the perfect day to discuss what we believe about the Church in relationship with God.

Potluck and Pageant

You're invited to our

Epiphany Pageant And Potluck!

Join us for food, fellowship, and frankincense
As we enjoy a little
Holy Dinner Theater



Bring a dish to pass – or just bring yourself.

Saturday, January 5 at 6:00 PM

St. James' Episcopal Church
4526 Albany Post Road
845-229-2820
www.stjameshydepark.org

ANNUAL MEETING REMINDER:

The Annual Meeting of St. James' will take place **Sunday, January 27, at 9:00 AM.** Please mark the date.

January 2019						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31 New Year's Eve Office Closed	1 New Year's Day Office Closed 6:30 Evening Prayer	2 10 AM Morning Prayer	3 11 AM Bible Study	4 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	5 6:00 PM Epiphany Potluck/Pag eant
6 Unction The Epiphany	7 Office Closed	8 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	9 10 AM Morning Prayer	10 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	11 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	12
13	14 Office Closed	15 7 PM Vestry	16 10 AM Morning Prayer 2:00 PM. Hyde Park Assisted Living Eucharist	17 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	18 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	19 8 AM Men's Breakfast
20	21 Office Closed	22 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	23 10 AM Morning Prayer	24 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	25 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	26

27 9:00 AM ANNUAL MEETING	28 Office Closed	29 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	30 10 AM Morning Prayer	31 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	
<p>Sundays: Holy Eucharist Rite I is at 8:00 AM Holy Eucharist Rite II (with music) is at 10:00 AM. Sunday School and nursery are available at 10:00 AM. Between Service Classes on Sundays are from 9:15 to 9:45 in the Wilks Room.</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/>

NOTE: the 2019 Calendar of Intercession is not yet available. We'll update things as it comes out

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ashley, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Linkin Ewalt, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Brian Ganter (deployed to Afghanistan), Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), Gloria Golden, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Tedi Kramer, Hope Jennings, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Jim Lynn (Carol Bender's brother - facing surgery), Doris Mack, Margaret, Andrew Mendelson, Beth and Ginero Milano, Lillian Peralta, Mary Bowers Peters (stroke), Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), John Ross, Hank Schroeder, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Carl Smith, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Georgia Verven, 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 all right.

Birthdays (this past week):	None
Birthdays (this coming week):	John Golden, Sanjana Shahani and Ryan Seagren
Acolytes:	January 6: Nancy Montero and Jaylen Thatcher January 13: Riley Hall and Amelia McNamara
Altar Guild:	January 6: Team I January 13: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	January 6: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch January 13: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	January 6: Patty Caswell and Patty Drake January 13: Eric Zavadil and Nancy Montero
Ushers:	January 6: Dean Caswell and Audrey Horne January 13: Nancy Montero and Anna-Marie Pitcher
Pledge Clerks:	January 6: Joanne Lown and Sue DeLorenzo January 13: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	January 6: John and Gloria Golden, Kathy Graff January 13: Liz Granados, Chuck Kramer, Nick and Chris Granados-Kramer and Tom Greene
Coffee Hour Hosts:	January 6: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil January 13: Jodi Triola and Mike Fenwick

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7,10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 119 - As with Gladness Men of old
Sequence: 124 - What star is this
Offertory: Jesus is Born, Prince of Peace
Communion: Taizé 35 - Sing praise and bless the Lord
Recessional: 128 - We Three Kings

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on First Sunday after Christmas

"The Beginning"

Happy New Year. A new beginning.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.”

That’s how John begins his gospel, the story of Jesus — with the beginning of all things. Before there was a world, there was the Word. Before there was an US, there was the Word. Before there was this moment in time that finds us all sitting here, there was the Word.

For him, it’s important for us to understand that the Word — which is Jesus — has been there all along, that the Word is at the root of all things, and that this Word is the key to life. And what is that word? It’s always been love. It always will be love. And love means appreciating the other, finding joy in the other, finding a reason to exist in the other to the extent that without the other, there is no life.

In short, John is saying that God is love, and without love, there is no life — or at least, it has no meaning.

At the same time, love is only the beginning of life. It’s what motivates everything worthwhile that we do in this life, but we don’t just go around all day saying, “Love...Love...Love.” If we grow in Christ, we make that love the core of our foundation as we go about our lives. We’re active in the world, but our action is founded in the love of Christ.

Jesus’ form of love — God’s form of love is never static. He loved and in doing so healed the sick. He loved, and in doing so fed the hungry. He loved, and in doing so stirred the hearts of those who were harming others — like Zachaeus who was a tax-collector known for skimming off the top.

Today, we are going to have a Baptism , which is the very beginning of a long journey with Christ. It is a beginning of a journey where, like an infant, you don’t even have to know what’s going on — let’s face it, what infant has any idea what their parents are doing for them at all? All they know is that they are loved.

But a child grows to understand that they can love because they were first loved. And their understanding of what it means to love grows, too. The theologian Tilden Edwards once wrote: “We are born into the image of God but called to grow into the full likeness of him.”

St. Paul tried to describe this in his letter to the Galatians by saying that when we were spiritually infants, we had the LAW to watch over us. We didn't have to understand much, just follow the rules — you know, like every small child does. His point, though, was that now that the love of Christ had been imprinted in our hearts, we did not need the law.

But even then, it was only the beginning because now came the part of growing in love. That's messy and troubling and confusing business.

But it's also what we buy into — no black-and-white thinking for us. No slavery where we are told what to do and when to do it. That's not the life of Christ. Rather, it's relating with God and sorting out what we need to be, do, go...

So we don't get to sit in the black-and-white world, What we get instead is light. We become light.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. — we are children of God.

Or, as the prophet Isaiah said,

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,

and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

When we have baptism classes, we always talk of baptism as a first kiss. Either that first kiss of a parent to a child they've just given birth to, or the first kiss of two lovers. Either way, that kiss creates a bond of love that changes their lives forever. It's only the beginning of the relationship, but a crucial one. There's much to learn, to do, to experience, to help, to enjoy and weep over.

This past Tuesday, we celebrated the birth of Christ — yes, it was less than a week ago. But for those of us who follow Christ, we know that it was not the end of a celebration but the beginning of a journey. That's WHY we have John's gospel following right on the tails of the birth. To remind us that it was never about the Baby Jesus, but about the way that child would grow and change the world.

Baptism is the same. It's nice, but its real power is that it launches the baptized onto a journey of transformation. A journey that never stops. One in which we are transformed by God who loves us as we are but never leaves us in that state. And a journey in which WE also love each person as they are, but never leaving them unchanged. The oppressed, we serve. The hungry, we feed, the abused, we shelter. The sad, we comfort. The hungry for education, we teach. And so on.

But in the beginning is always love, the love of God, the love which is embodied in Jesus Christ. So whether you are being baptized today or are marking the fiftieth anniversary of your baptism, remember that this moment is a beginning. Feel the love of God that is inside you — and let it grow. Amen.

A WORD ABOUT RECORDED SERMONS:

Most weeks, I upload a recorded copy of the sermon onto my Facebook page as well as St. James' YouTube channel. I have not yet figured out how to upload them to the St. James' Facebook page but am working on it.

You can also listen to sermons by going to YouTube (www.youtube.com) and searching for "St. James Episcopal Church, Hyde Park, NY". There, you will not only find sermons, but also videos of the Fireside Chats and other videos of interest. You can subscribe to that page, and then when new content is uploaded, you will receive a notification.

SERMON VALUATION FORM

It is not necessary to take notes during the sermon. Rather, you can take some time afterwards to recollect the sermon and its effect on you. Give yourself a few minutes for each of the questions. If you choose to share this with the preacher, it can be a powerful aid to better preaching - but this is not a form to be handed to the preacher and forgotten. It is an aid for you, so you can speak directly with the preacher and answer follow-up questions.

1. WHAT ARE YOU STILL HEARING?

That is, without evaluating it, what are the words or phrases from the sermon that are still echoing in your ears? Are there any "ear worms"?

2. WHERE MIGHT THIS BE LEADING?

As a listener, where does this sermon lead you? What does it invite you to? What are the next steps in your faith that might arise from this sermon?

3. HOW DOES THIS SERMON "PLAY"?

That is, how is it organized or ordered? What steps has the preacher taken you through? What structure did you notice in this sermon? What has it asked you to do?

4. HOW MIGHT THIS SERMON "GROW"?

That is, what suggestions would you have to hone the message of this sermon, to make it more engaging, inspiring, logical, fleshed out... No sermon is ever entirely done; its themes will be revisited over time. What would help the next time be more compelling?