

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: October 29, 2017

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Bible Verse

For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts.

- 1 Thessalonians 2:4

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Pleasing God. That is the heart of our human endeavor. What we do in the world - as people of faith - is not out of fear or hope for gain. It is to please the one we love.

Back when we were kids, my dad had a t-shirt that had a popular saying of the day: "If Mama ain't Happy, ain't nobody happy." But we did not try to keep Mom happy because we were afraid of her temper (she was always slow to anger); we tried to please her because we loved her. It is no less so today as she lives with Alzheimer's and struggles to remember things. When we do something that makes her smile, it is the same smile as always, and though she can neither reward nor punish, that smile is precious to us.

Because our relationship with God is more difficult to grasp than human, it's easy to forget what it means to please God - or even that we can. For millennia, people have tried through sacrifices of all sorts to please their various gods including God. Often, this has been out of fear, or in a sort of bargain for, say a good harvest. Even though Jesus changed our understanding of the nature of our relationship with God, many to this day try to please God more out of fear or duty than love.

We are called to please God - certainly to prefer pleasing God over pleasing people. We are called to do it because we love, not because we fear. But the ways we are called to please God are manifold and personal, just as the way each child pleases a parent is personal.

And yet there are some common themes. We are pleased when loved ones spend time with us. So is God. We are pleased when loved ones share our values such as kindness and mercy. So is God. We are pleased when loved ones devote time and energy to things we feel are important. So is God.

In our case, that would mean that what pleases God would be prayer and meditation, worship together (I know that my mom is always delighted when we come together as a family), a desire and willingness to share that faith with others, kindness toward all, honesty, and a passion for justice.

Those are the things we naturally gravitate toward anyway as Christians, perhaps because we know instinctively that they *are* what pleases God. This is all connected with the Stewardship Season we are now enjoying.

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In our Stewardship, we use what God gives us to do what we believe will please God, whether it be to be more faithful in worship, to feed the hungry, or to talk to someone about your faith. Of course, we use our resources, including our money, and we do it joyfully because what we do produces joy, and there is nothing that pleases God more than all of God's children living in joy.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

For the past several weeks, we have been involved in an experiment placing the sermon at the end of the service. Experiments sometimes work out, and sometimes they fail, but either way, we learn something.

This particular experiment has failed. After listening to many people, it has become clear to me that it has satisfied nobody. Therefore, effective this Sunday, we will return to having the sermon after the Gospel.

We will continue to work on ways for Sunday School to be able to participate more in worship and for Acolytes to better attend Sunday School, but for now, we will return to the way things were before.

Announcements

Graveyard Tour – A Video Retrospective:

If you are interested in a video presentation of this year's very entertaining stories from the Graveyard Tour, please click on this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_azX1C5ic4. Congratulations to the actors who so convincingly portrayed their characters. The response from the audiences who attended the six nights of tours was uniformly positive. A great accomplishment for St. James'.

20th Anniversary Fundraiser:

Join all your brothers and sisters on Saturday, November 4 at 5:30 for a potluck celebrating Fr. Chuck's 20 years at St. James'. In the spirit of this congregation's focus on serving others, this potluck will raise funds for Episcopal Relief and Development specifically to help the survivors of Hurricane Maria. Checks should be made payable to St James' Church with "20th Anniversary" in the memo line. See you on the 4th!

There will be music (compliments of The Plan B's and Spirit of Unity), food, and good times.

Run For Vestry:

The Nominating Committee of St. James' Vestry would like to invite you to run for election. From now until the beginning of January, the Nominating Committee will receive names of those interested in serving the church through this important group.

Among the Vestry's functions is to work toward the financial health of the parish, to help guide the leadership spiritually, to consider practical goals, and to make decisions about who uses our space. By becoming a member of St. James' Vestry, you join the ranks of such luminaries as Samuel Bard, Morgan Lewis, Franklin Roosevelt, and Helen Fink. More importantly, you join the ranks of brothers and sisters today who want to help this parish love God and serve God.

New Between-Service Class:

Starting November 12, we will have a new Between-Service Class. Called "Miracles", it will focus on one miracle each week - usually one performed by Christ. In these classes, we'll explore what a miracle is, what their purpose is, and how they affected people of the Bible and us. These classes start at 9:15 Sunday morning and end by 9:45. We invite everyone to join!

Newcomers Reception:

Mark your calendars for December 8! If you have been at St. James' for a year or less, get ready to receive an invitation to our Fall Newcomer's Reception. This is a time to meet new people, learn a little more about what's going on here, and in general have a good time. If you are an "old-comer," join us to help welcome new members. Festivities start at 7:00 PM.

Safe Church Training:

Have you had Safe Church training? It is a program offered by the Diocese to keep all people safe from abuse of all sorts while involved in our ministries. It deals with sexual and other abuse and helps us avoid questionable situations. The training is mandated for all clergy. It is also required for all lay employees. The bishop expects all Sunday School teachers and youth workers to take the training as well as Vestry and wardens. It is open to all parishioners.

The training is available in three forms: 1) you can go to New York at announced sessions (or an annual one in our region). 2) we could hire a trainer to come to our parish and all do it together. 3) you can take the course online - you have to create an account, which you would do through me since I am the parish administrator for Safe Church. If you're interested, and I hope you are, please see me (Fr. Chuck).

October 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
22 Steward-ship Campaign Starts 3:00 PM Youth Group	23 Office Closed 6 PM Women's Group	24	25 10 AM Morning Prayer	26 11 AM Bible Study	27	28
29 11:30 Garden Blessing	30 Office Closed	31 HALLOWEEN	1 ALL SAINTS DAY 10 AM Morning Prayer	2 11 AM Bible Study	3	4 5:30 20th Anniversary POTLUCK
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.						

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.diocesenyny.org/administration/for-clergy/liturgical-and-sacramental/diocesan-calendar-of-intercession/>

October

29 St. Philip's Church, Manhattan

30 St. Simeon's Church, Bronx

31 Grace Church (West Farms), Bronx

November

1 **(All Saints' Day)** All Saints' Church, Harrison

2 All Souls' Church, Manhattan

3 All Saints' Church, Valley Cottage

4 All Saints' Church, Manhattan

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, 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 Konyon, Barbara Kubiak (Mother of Donna Tracy-Coffman), 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), Pat Rooney, John Ross, Richard Secor, Sharon Secor (recovering from heart surgery), Karen Shan, 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.

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):

Grant Ferris, Rebecca Foote and Andrew V. Hall

Birthdays
(this coming week):

Michael Fenwick, Sue Fenwick, Sophie Ciferri and Sue DeLorenzo

Acolytes:	October 29: Team 3 November 5: Team
Altar Guild:	October 29: Team I November 5: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	October 29: Debbie Belding and Lynne Koch November 5: Lucille Ogden and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	October 29: Wendy Urban-Mead and Mike Fenwick November 5: Wilma Tully and Nancy Montero
Ushers:	October 29: Patty Drake, Bobbie Wells November 5: Nancy Montero, Anna Marie Pitcher
Pledge Clerks:	October 29: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher November 5: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	October 29: Rich, Leighann, Alix, Sophie and Eden Ciferri and Clarence, Joann, Kathryn and Anna Clark November 5: Donna Coffman-Tracy, Gwen Cookingham, Kathleen Craft
Coffee Hour Hosts:	October 29: Barbara Slegel and the Choir November 5: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil

This Week's Lectionary

Deuteronomy 34:1-12
 Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17
 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8
 Matthew 22:34-46

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 581 - Where Charity and Love Prevail
 Sequence: 657 - Love Divine All Loves Excelling
 Offertory: "O God Beyond All Praising"
 Communion: 74 (LEVAS) - Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love
 Recessional: 336 - Come with Us O Blessed Jesus

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost (October 22, 2017)

"What We Owe"

This time last week, I was worshipping at Trinity College Chapel in Dublin. What was funny was afterward, they invited us to a reception - kind of like coffee hour - only there they had wine - port, I believe. When I explained how we had coffee hour with no wine, someone commented on the barbarism of it all. But *I* missed the coffee!

Hard to imagine it was just a week ago. But this has been a busy week for St. James'. A Vestry meeting, a new monthly service at the Hyde Park Assisted Living Center, the inauguration of this year's Reading Adventures program, Regional Council's Executive Committee Meeting, and just yesterday we had the men's group, a funeral, and of course, our final Graveyard Tours of the season last night. This afternoon, the youth group will be raking leaves - and tomorrow, we observe the Feast Day of St. James', our Patron.

We are an involved church, and I owe a debt of thanks to all those here who work so hard to make St. James' a light on the hill. That's part of what these new pictures on the walls are about - a way of recognizing how we live our faith.

But all this activity (and the fact that today begins our Stewardship Season) does beg the question: what do we owe to God? Our time? Our talent? Our treasure? How much?

Today's gospel seems uniquely suited to address that question.

You see, the whole trap that the Pharisees and Herodians set for Jesus was designed around the question, "What do we owe to the emperor vs what we owe God?"

There are other questions: what do we owe ourselves, our posterity, our society, our economy...

But in the gospel, it could be reduced to those two options.

Now, it was an odd group who tried to trap Jesus, an unlikely collusion between Herodians (who collaborated with the Romans) and the Pharisees (who hated the Romans with every fiber of their being) But they both feared and hated Jesus enough to come together. Besides, they thought that together, they had the perfect trap. They publicly asked him whether Jews should pay Roman tax. If he answered "Yes", then the Pharisees could publicly condemn him, and even his own followers would reject him. If he answered "No", then the Herodians could publicly condemn him, and he would most likely be arrested by the Romans.

Of course, Jesus was ready for them. He asked for the coin for the tax - a coin with a graven image on it probably produced by a Herodians (or from the money changers, though he had cleared them out the day before) - and they produced a Denarius with Caesar's image. And he uttered that famous line: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's."

In essence, he has just told them that they have to decide for themselves what they owe to the emperor vs God. They have to decide for themselves where their hearts lie and what they value. God or the things of this world?

And that's the question facing us. What do **we** owe to God vs all the emperors of our lives? It's an apt question in this Stewardship season: after all what is stewardship if not using the resources God gives us to further God's kingdom of love on earth? What is Stewardship if not caring for that which God has placed before us, whether it be people, places or things.

That's what we strive to do at St. James' - further the realm of God using the resources God gives us.

Those resources are made up of both things and people. This building, the parish hall - our graveyard ... and all the wonderful people who work so hard to show and share God's love.

None of them - none of us - is perfect, by the way. Things fall apart, they smell, there are holes in places there shouldn't be... and frankly, you could say the same about most of us, too.

But neither people nor places have to be perfect for God to use them. And this church has been a superb place for God's presence to be made known for more than 200 years.

The ancient Celts had a phrase that could describe us well. They would call St. James' a *Thin Place*, a place where the veil between physical world and spiritual world is so thin that there is communion between the two. Where the divine is more easily made known to the world.

That is one of the great values of the church - here is where we open the broader world of God's presence to those who are trapped in the world of the emperor.

Those pictures on the wall? They show how we breach that veil, how we connect the world to the realm of God. We are the reminder that God is everywhere, with us always to the end of time. That is who we are.

And yes, this work does require things like buildings and staff and - by golly even taxes to the state. That's what it takes so we can make available space for people to encounter God's love. That is what we owe to God - and we do what it takes to fulfill that obligation.

Sure, everyone has competing interests. We have our own taxes, our own housing & food, our own entertainments (which God does not begrudge us when they are healthy). But as we approach our considerations of what we owe, think about Jesus with those folks trying to trap him. What was it he said that stumped them so completely? "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs God"

The catch in this statement - something that they all knew in their hearts, just as you know it in your hearts - everything is God's.

All belongs to God. In the coming weeks as you consider your pledge, consider those Pharisees and Herodians. Consider what belongs to the world and what belongs to God. And may we, when we offer our pledges in November, lift them up to God with the words we say [at 8:00](#) when we receive the offerings: "All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee."

Amen.

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