

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: November 12, 2017

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

Bible Verse

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died."

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write with remarkable gratitude in my heart for the love and affection you showed me this past weekend. What a wonderful celebration.

But I also write with a certain weariness and sadness. In one month, we have had two horrific mass shootings that killed or injured nearly 600 people. That doesn't count the many other smaller mass shootings (defined as four or more shot, not including the perpetrator).

This letter is not about gun control, though we can have that debate later if you would like. It is about the phrase "thoughts and prayers" that has been the subject of so much debate following these events. You may be aware of it, but if not, you should know that in virtually every public forum, people who wish to express sympathy and solidarity with victims have been saying the victims are "in my thoughts and prayers."

Lately, there has been a backlash. Some say, "Thoughts and prayers are not enough. What makes a difference is action, and we need action now!"

They are not mutually exclusive. To get a handle on it, however, we should consider what prayer is, because this "thoughts and prayers" stuff is taken too lightly in our society. Especially the prayer.

In the Christian tradition, prayer is communication with God. It is first and foremost *listening* for what God might whisper (or yell) to us. Only after listening is it asking, requesting, praising, thanking God for any number of things. It is also simply enjoying God's presence. Prayer is both silent and verbal.

But one thing it is *not* passive. When we pray, when we request something of God, for example, we are not merely going to a prayer vending machine and putting in our dollar. We are engaging in a conversation. We are opening ourselves up to action as well, because when God talks, it is rarely to say, "Don't you worry about a thing. You just sit passively while I take care of it all."

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No, throughout our history of relationship with God, prayer has generally led to some sort of action. Because we are God's hands and feet in the world.

Unfortunately, often when we say we will pray for someone, we don't actually expect anything to happen. We figure it's okay to say, "I'll pray for you," and leave it at that.

Don't do that.

First of all, when you offer to pray - pray! Say their name out loud as you lift them up to God. And then *listen* for what action God may call you to. If you pray earnestly, it might well be that God will call you to action. As an example, with regard to gun violence, the Episcopal Church's position is that we are called by God to reduce it.

There are all sorts of theological reasons for this. He who lives by the sword, says the Lord, dies by the sword. More tellingly, those who depend on guns for their safety fail to understand that our hope, trust, and faith is in Christ alone. Those who would have us become an armed camp miss Jesus' call to remember that our true home is not here but with God. It betrays a lack of trust in the one who defeats death through his resurrection.

That being said, on a purely practical level, *nobody* thinks gun violence is a good thing - especially at the rate we endure in this country. We *all* want to reduce it. Just understand that when you pray for the victims of such violence, it is an empty prayer unless it comes with a willingness to step up and actually act. What that action might be, I do not know. Frankly, that's beside the point. The point is that we as Christians are called to more than merely tossing out easy phrases that have little or no meaning. We are called to live as Jesus would have us.

And that life, my brothers and sisters, is one where we not only talk the talk but walk the walk.

As To Church Safety: Among clergy in the region, the question has arisen about what we do as a church to increase our own safety, especially during worship. The Diocese of New York has been working on emergency plans, though they are not applicable to every situation. The Hyde Park Association of Churches will have a speaker discussing Department of Homeland Security measures for Houses of Worship.

We have a Nursery School at St. James' and have already instituted some safety measures including the door buzzer system. We will want to explore safety in the church itself given our particular architecture.

And yet, we can never forget that we are not called to live in fear. We are called to live in a dangerous world with the freedom of those who already know where their home is. We are called to act in the world knowing that our redeemer lives and has promised we will live eternally.

Every Ash Wednesday, we impose ashes and say, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." In other words, "Remember that you will die." No amount of planning will change that. But the reason we remind ourselves that we will die is to also remind ourselves that through Christ's undying love, we will live.

So, if we say we are going to pray, then pray. If our prayers, let us listen carefully. And if our prayers lead us to action, then let us act. Meanwhile, even as we look to safety measures here, we will live without fear. Because when Christ is present, fear has no room.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

REPEAT NOTICE: EPISCOPAL VISITATION

Every two years, one of our bishops visits St. James'. Typically, at that time, we confirm those who seek confirmation and receive those who wish to enter the Episcopal Church from another denomination.

We just got notice this week that the visitation is nearly a year earlier than expected. Usually, the bishop comes in December. In 2018, Bishop Mary Glasspool is coming in February. **February 25** to be precise.

What that means is that we do not have a lot of time for Inquirers' Classes! SO, if you would like to be Confirmed, Received, or would like to re-affirm your faith on February 25, please contact Fr. Chuck AS SOON AS POSSIBLE so we can set up classes.

Announcements



The wonderful 20th Anniversary Celebration last Saturday evening had music, crowds, LOTS of food and fun!

Special thanks to the Vestry and organizers, as well as to the Plan Bs and Spirit of Unity for their great music.

But the real thanks go everyone at St. James' for such a lovely time!



The Next Day we continued our work not only with worship in the morning but with the blessing of the Community Garden and Thanks for the Harvest. We've put it to bed for the winter and await the Spring when it will once again bring forth food for the hungry in both body and soul.



Between-Service Class Starting THIS SUNDAY:

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!

Men's and Women's Groups:

The Women's Group meeting this month is on Monday, **November 13 at 6:00 PM** at Coppola's. The Men's Breakfast is Saturday, **November 18 at 8:00 AM**. Hope you can make whichever one is right for you!

Outreach Meeting:

Outreach will be meeting **Wednesday, November 15 at 6:30 pm** in the Wilkes room. Please join us!

RENEWED APPEAL: Run For Vestry:

This is a new appeal to you. Please consider running for Vestry. We have several positions open (more than usual because one of our Vestry members moved out of state). This is a powerful and important ministry - not a burden. If you are asked to consider running, please think of it as an invitation from the Holy Spirit. And if this notice touches your heart, please consider *that* an invitation as well. The Vestry would love to have you.

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).

November 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5 CHANGE CLOCKS! Unction 12 Noon Garden Blessing	6 Office Closed	7	8 10 AM Morning Prayer	9 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures 7 PM Vestry	10	11 Diocesan Convention
12 9:15 BETWEEN SERVICE CLASSES START	13 Office Closed 6 PM Women's Group (at Coppola's)	14	15 10 AM Morning Prayer	16 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	17	18 8 AM Men's Breakfast 10 AM Altar Guild Meeting
19 12 Noon T-Day Baskets/Youth Group	20 Office Closed	21	22 10 AM Morning Prayer	23 Thanks-giving	24	25

26 IN-GATHERING SUNDAY	27 Office Closed	28	29 ALL SAINTS DAY 10 AM Morning Prayer	30 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	1	2
<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.</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/>

- 12 Deputies to Diocesan Convention
- 13 St. Peter’s Church (Westchester Square), Bronx
- 14 Ascension & Holy Trinity Church, West Park
- 15 St. Margaret’s Church (Longwood), Bronx
- 16 Sisters of St. Margaret
- 17 Diocesan Adjustment Board
- 18 St. Hilda’s & St. Hugh’s School, 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 Konyn, 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):	August ("Bud") Oetjen, Riley Hall and Gwendolyn Cookingham
Birthdays (this coming week):	Margaret McNamara, Katherine Urban-Mead and Richard Ciferri
Acolytes:	November 12: Team 2 November 19: Team 3
Altar Guild:	November 12: Team II November 19: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	November 12: Lucille Ogden and Sue DeLorenzo November 19: Deb Belding and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	November 12: Patty Caswell and Andy Hall November 19: Wendy Urban-Mead and Barbara Slegel
Ushers:	November 12: Andrew and Tonya Hall November 19: Judy Douglass, Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	November 12: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright November 19: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	November 12: Charlotte DeGroff, Sue and Don DeLorenzo, Stephanie Dieckler November 19: Ann Dingee, Sue Dingee, Chris, Sue and Sara Dingee
Coffee Hour Hosts:	November 12: Jodi Triola, Michael Fenwick November 19: Wendy and Russell Urban-Mead, Deirdre Mae Micker

This Week's Lectionary

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25
Psalm 78:1-7

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 61 - Sleepers Wake! a Voice Astounds Us
Sequence: 68 - Rejoice! Rejoice Believers and Let Thy Light Appear
Offertory: "What does the Lord Require of You"
Communion: 690 - Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
Recessional: 594 God of Grace and God of Glory

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on All Saints Sunday (November 5, 2017)

"Scars"

On my right hand is a scar about 3/4" long. I got it on New Year's Eve 1978/1979 - my senior year in high school. I was working at a pharmacy, and we were closing up for the night when a guy came in and said his car had died, and he needed a jump.

I had cables in my old VW van and went to get them, but the door was frozen shut. So I tugged and tugged on it until the handle broke off in my hand. Never did get the door open, but the scar remains to tell the story.

Also on my right arm is a mis-shaped muscle. That happened when I was eight and got my hand stuck in an electric ring-washer. The ringers pulled my arm through all the way to my elbow before somebody could get it turned off.

More recently, I have an inch-long scar on my left knee that I got when I was going in to read a bible story to the nursery school kids. We play a little game where I knock on the door then run into the parish office before they answer it, so they think I've disappeared. They think I'm magic. Only this time, there was water on the floor, and I slipped and fell into the doorway. The teachers' response? "No running in the halls!"

I actually have quite a few scars. Matching ones on my upper arms that almost look like tattoos - got them when I fell into the fire pit while playing frisbee with the boys. One on my right foot from getting stomped on by a soccer cleat, and another on the same foot from Towel Camp when After a hard day working, I put on flip flops and immediately split my toe open (playing frisbee).

Then there are the scars you can't see. Broken relationships, losses of loved ones, unkind words someone said. These leave just as permanent a mark.

And of course, there are scars you give others. One of my sons has a scar on his face from when he was little. We were outside playing when I tripped over him and fell on top of him. He probably never feels it, but I do whenever I see him.

I think I can say with confidence that you have your own scars, too. Everyone does. Nobody gets through life without them. And if you think you don't have scars, either you have not lived, or you are in denial.

These scars are not something to hide. They are what make us who we are. They are our story. They're also not something we try to avoid because that would be avoiding life itself.

Now, the thing about a scar is, it is also a sign of healing. It's no longer an open wound. When you have an open wound, that's something to take care of - after it heals, that's a story.

There was a preaching teacher who once said, "Preach from your scars, not your wounds." What I think she meant was, when you preach, use the healing that's happened in your life, not your current hurts. Current wounds have no lessons for others because you're too caught up in them yourself.

I bring up scars because we are observing All Saints Day today. When you think about the saints, you have to think about scars.

Not just the scars of the white-robed martyrs who've been washed in the blood of the lamb. I'm talking about the everyday saints who preach from their scars.

To get what I mean, let's look at the gospel. You know the beatitudes: blessed are the meek, the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who hunger for righteousness, the peacemakers, the merciful, those who are persecuted for Christ's sake, and so on.

Each one of those attributes either arises out of life's scars or can lead to them. The merciful, for example, have often been shown mercy themselves in painful situations. The poor in spirit have gone through things that help them know their own weakness. Peacemakers have likely known conflict and the grace of peace.

Many who seek to serve humanity do so based on their scars, the hurts they have received at the hands of life, and the healing they have experienced at the hands of God. They also understand that being a saint can lead to more hurts - we watched "42" yesterday, the movie about Jackie Robinson. Though he did the right thing, he was viciously abused both verbally and physically. But like the saints, he knew that healing was possible, and so he had the courage to persevere, just as we can have courage to seek righteousness or peace or mercy is there.

The saints are those who know their own scars and use them to preach the gospel to a Wounded world.

I do not presume to tell anyone here about their own scars. You know what yours are. All I can do is encourage you to see them as your text for preaching the gospel, as your tool for being a saint. Amen.

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