

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: November 19, 2017

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Bible Verse

"As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the Lord our God, until he show us his mercy."

- Psalm 123:2-3

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

You have all probably been reading, listening to, and watching the saga of the Senate candidate Roy Moore. Or the director Harvey Weinstein. Or the Senator Al Franken. Or Bill O'Reilly, or Kevin Spacey, or Mark Halperin or any number of other prominent men who have been named as sexual offenders, accused of abuses ranging from verbal harassment to groping to rape to pedophilia.

In fact, in every aspect of life where a person might have power over another - including the church - there has been abuse of power in a sexual context. To be sure, some of it is merely inappropriate while some is outright criminal, but at its heart, each of these is an exertion of power over someone perceived to be vulnerable.

If you are in any doubt about where the church stands on this, it has never been acceptable to force oneself on another person. It has never been acceptable to demonize, demean or objectify another child of God. There are degrees of offense, of course. It is worse to touch someone who does not want to be touched, especially in intimate places, than to make a lewd comment. Nevertheless, each of these is an abuse, not only against another person but against God. Any time we refuse to see another human being as beneath us, as a toy or a tool, then we fall away from the Gospel which only calls us to love each other as ourselves.

That is one of the reasons why the Episcopal Church has so strongly encouraged, and for all clergy and lay employees required, regular training in what sexual abuse is, how to avoid it or even the appearance of it, and what to do if it occurs. This training is also required for volunteers who work intimately with youth, such as youth group leaders. Sunday School teachers are strongly urged to undertake. AND ALL PARISHIONERS are invited to take this training. For the past several weeks, there has been a notice about this training, which is available in a couple of different forms to accommodate the needs of participants. Contact me if you would like to take this training.

It doesn't do us any good to say that this sort of behavior should not happen in a church (or anywhere else, for that matter). It does. And it has for a long time. Back in the 1850s, the bishop of this diocese was suspended for repeated inappropriate, unwanted sexual contact with several of women.

4526 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park NY 12538 T 845-229-2820 F 845-229-5293

W www.stjameshydepark.org E stjamesoffice@stjameshydepark.org

f at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/22692330307>

To be clear, the church does not condemn consensual sex between adults who are not married. It does, however, call upon all Christians to take it very seriously and to understand it as appropriate only in the context of a committed relationship. This is not about prudishness but about respect for the other and the abuse of power.

The same principals are active, by the way in racism, or gender discrimination or xenophobia. The need to diminish the other in order to feel more powerful. That is why the church rejects all of these and far from the mind of God.

I am not shocked by any of these allegations of sexual abuse by prominent men - or by anonymous people around the world. It has been going on a long time, and it will continue for a long time. That does not mean that we have to accept it. We are called by Christ to never accept injustice even though it is an enduring evil. We have things we can do to reduce that abuse, and the first is to take the church's training. I hope you will.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

LAST CALL: INQUIRERS CLASSES

As you know, Bishop Mary Glasspool is coming on **February 25** for our Episcopal Visitation. She will confirm, receive, and/or baptize.

Inquirers' Classes will begin **Wednesday, November 29 at 7:00 PM!** 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

Between-Service Class for THIS SUNDAY:

This week's Between-Service class focuses on the miracle of **Jesus Walking on Water**. In these classes, we explore what a miracle is, what their purpose is, and how they affected people of the Bible and us. Class starts at **9:15** Sunday morning and end by **9:45**. We invite everyone to join!

Men's Breakfast:

The Men's Breakfast is Saturday, **November 18 at 8:00 AM**. Hope you can make whichever one is right for you!

Altar Guild Meeting:

The Altar Guild invites you to a meeting at **9:00 AM this Saturday, November 18**. They will plan for Advent and Easter. They will meet in the church. If you have never served but are interested, they will be glad to show you around!

Craft Fair Saturday:

Get your Christmas shopping done early and help our Nursery School. The Annual Nursery School Craft Fair is this **Saturday, November 18**.

Thanksgiving Baskets:

The Outreach Committee will distribute Thanksgiving Baskets this Sunday, November 19 after the 10 AM service.

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. You will find a more formal invitation in this Epistle.

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
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/You th 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>						

You are invited to

a

Newcomers Reception

at

St. James' Episcopal Church

(in the Wilks Room)

on

Friday, December 8, 2017

at

7:00 pm



Meet others who are new to

St. James',

Meet "old timers" and leaders

Learn what's going on and how you can get involved

(if that's what you're looking for).

RSVP by December 1

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/>

- 19 Church of St. Edward the Martyr, Manhattan
- 20 Iglesia San Andrés, Yonkers
- 21 St. Andrew's Church, Bronx
- 22 Church of Saints John, Paul & Clement, Mount Vernon
- 23 **Thanksgiving Day**
Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens and Feeding Programs in the Diocese
- 24 The Stewardship Officer of the Diocese
- 25 Grace Church, Hastings-on-Hudson

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):

Margaret McNamara, Katherine Urban-Mead and Richard Ciferri

Birthdays (this coming week):	Audrey Horne, Dean Caswell, Janet Bright, Kathie Champion, Bob Seils, Bruce Mackenzie, Evan Weaver, Ingrid Anne Koch Hodgins, Susan Gausepohl, Kurt Burkhardt and Beverly O'Halloran
Acolytes:	November 19: Team 3 November 26: Team
Altar Guild:	November 19: Team III November 26: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	November 19: Deb Belding and Jim Smyth November 26: Julett Butler and Thomas Finnigan
10 a.m. Readers:	November 19: Wendy Urban-Mead and Barbara Slegel November 26: Russell Urban-Mead and Charlotte DeGroff
Ushers:	November 19: Judy Douglass, Vince Asher November 26: Dean Caswell, Audrey Horne
Pledge Clerks:	November 19: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher November 26: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	November 19: Ann Dingee, Sue Dingee, Chris, Sue and Sara Dingee November 26: Judy Douglass, Patty Drake, Jeff Fishwick
Coffee Hour Hosts:	November 19: Wendy and Russell Urban-Mead, Deirdre Mae Micker November 26: Brian Rance, Saira Shahani

This Week's Lectionary

Judges 4:1-7
 Psalm 123
 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
 Matthew 25:14-30

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 541 - Come Labor On
 Sequence: 551 - Rise Up Ye Saints of God
 Offertory: "Once He Came in Blessing"
 Communion: 9 - Not Here for High and Holy Things
 Recessional: 561 - Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost (November 12, 2017)

"A Bridesmaid's Tale"

I have tried to approach today's parable from many vantage points, but every time I look at it, a little voice tells me, "The foolish bridesmaid needs to have her story told."

There are reasons for this, and we will discuss them a little later, but IF I am going to tell this story from the point of view of one of these unfortunate women, if I'll need to put this in her voice, then I'm going to need YOU to engage in the willing suspension of disbelief. That is, I'll need you to use your imaginations because I am not a woman. So... just pretend I am. Okay?

Here goes:

"This was not my first wedding. My oldest sister was married just last year, so the other bridesmaids and I all knew what was expected of us. We weren't worried - we'd all done a really good job last year.

Now, to be clear, not all the bridesmaids were sisters. Not the last time and not this time. There were servants who would go with my sister when she was married, and there were friends. Also, you need to know that a bridesmaid in our culture was not exactly what you are thinking of.

While local customs varied from town to town, in general, weddings in our day were long, drawn out affairs that went in three stages. First was the negotiation. That's when the fathers of the bride and groom got together and made a match. Often the groom had a say in things, and quite often the bride's father would ask her if she would consent to the wedding, but the terms were generally agreed upon by the fathers.

Then, once the contract was drawn up and money paid - the bride's father received money to compensate him for the loss of a worker, and the bride received a dowry - then the couple were betrothed. And that meant that legally, they were husband and wife.

This period lasted a year or two while the groom built a wedding hut and a permanent home if he needed to.

Then came the kidnapping. Well, that's what I call it. Really, it was just the groom coming to take his bride. But traditions formed around this, and in our day, this became quite a big affair. After the bridal room and home were completed, and after the groom received permission from his father, the groom came with his friends to sweep his bride away. Usually they usually came at night like thieves.

It was all a big secret, when he was coming. Only, of course we knew in general terms. We knew when he had finished his home - gossip travels fast in these parts. So we had some warning that he would be coming in a night or two. And in fairness, the groom and his friends were always loud and rowdy, blowing a rams horn to warn us he was almost there. That's when we bridesmaids went into action. You see, our job was to accompany the bride - to go with her when she is taken away, so she is not alone.

So for a couple of nights, we waited with her, lamps burning, ready to leave at the drop of a hat - or the sound of the horn.

I had done this before. I knew what to do.

Only, today had not been a normal day. Actually, it seems like life hadn't been normal for the past several months.

There had been those attacks by raiders who had killed several people in nearby towns. My father said there there was nothing to worry about, but after the second one, I was always on edge. From then on, every approaching caravan was a threat.

Then there were the Elamites who had begun to settle in our town. Sure, Elamites, Moabites, even Egyptians had been coming and going forever, but several families of Elamites had come and *stayed* in our town. It is not in our nature to tolerate foreigners well, and these people were definitely *too* foreign for me. When I saw them gathered in the marketplace - as they always did - I felt edgy.

This was all on top of the worries we had about what my sister's marriage would mean for us. Sure, my Father received a small sum of money, but it *hardly* compensated for the work she had done. Now, either I would have to do more work, or we would have to hire a new worker. And if we did that, then my father would have less money available to woo a prospective husband for me or for my bride money! It could be expensive, and he had to send me away with money!

And *then* there was the work. You see, even though we waited at night - and I must tell you, he did not show up that first night. We waited the entire time for nothing - we still had to do our work during the day. So we were exhausted. The work of a woman in our time was non-stop and grueling.

After that first night, after we had waited for nothing, and then after doing our work during the day, we had a little free time - which felt precious to me. There was a group of boys in the street playing a game, and they were such a good diversion from all the cares and concerns of my world that I was taken up with their little game.

So, when some of the bridesmaids came and told me they were going to buy more oil, I was annoyed. I did not want to stop watching this game. I did not want to deal with the Elamites. I did not want to risk the attacks even though I knew these were highly unlikely. Besides, the groom *had* to come that night, and if he came at a reasonable hour, I should have enough. I told them to go ahead without me, and kept watching the game.

Well, you know the rest of the story. That thoughtless man was late. Before I knew it, my wick was flickering. I was not alone, of course. There were other bridesmaids who hadn't gone to the market, and they were in trouble, too. But not even my little sister would share her oil with me. She said she would run out herself if she did. Inconsiderate little twerp.

There was nothing left to do but go back to the market I had avoided that day. The oil merchant would open for us because the wedding is so important. We went together - but while we were still far off, we heard the horn. By the time we returned, they were gone. The groom had swept in and fled with his prize. Again, there was nothing left to do but travel alone - the five of us - to the town where he was taking her.

Here's what you may not know. Eventually, we *did* get in. It took a lot of talking, and it was embarrassing, and we had missed the most wonderful part of the tradition, and my sister was not at all happy with us, but ... we did get in. I regret causing a scene, and I regret missing out on some of the best parts. Still ... we did get in, and for that, I am thankful."

The End.

Well, not the end of the sermon, just the end of the story. But the end of the sermon is coming!

We just need to figure out what this story has to do with *us*. To make the connection, let's take just a glance at today's Collect which says that Jesus came "to destroy the works of the devil." That is, the works of Satan.

In our Inquirers classes - which are starting at the end of this month if you're interested - but you have to register! - we describe Satan as that which gets between us and God, between us and our neighbor. It is at its core not physical but spiritual (often leading to physical, but...). It is what takes our focus off of the goal of life which is Christ and the love Christ calls us to bring into the world.

An example of that was an exchange I had this week with someone who insisted that the church shooting in Texas proves that what we need is guns in church - or better yet, armed guards. He got to this conclusion not through the love of God but through the fear of the world. He got there by taking his focus off of our anchor, our hope, our guide in this world and the next, Jesus Christ. When fear or anger take your focus off of Christ, you are in danger of missing the bridegroom's coming.

That is what happened to our bridesmaid. Fear, dislike of the outsider, worries about money, work, distractions - they all took her focus off of her goal - the groom. These were real worries of her day just as they (and countless others) are real for us today. But we can not allow them to take our focus away from - to separate us from - knowing and sharing the love of Christ.

That is the message of the foolish bridesmaid. I told it in her voice because she is us. And her warning is - even if we rightly trust God's mercy, taking our focus off Christ will lead to regret. Focus, buy your oil, prepare for the kingdom. Thus says the bridesmaid. Amen.

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