

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: November 26, 2017

Last Sunday after Pentecost (Christ the King)

Bible Verse

*"Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song."
- Psalm 100:1*

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving! As we approach the season of Advent (it begins in just over a week!), it's a good idea for us to think about what this most recent holiday was all about.

Obviously, Thanksgiving is all about giving thanks, right? But for some reason, we think of it as a uniquely American holiday. You know, the Pilgrims and all?

In one sense, it is unique to our country. That's because for us, Thanksgiving is an Origin Story, a story about how we got here and how we overcame adversity and succeeded. It is, in a way, a story of God blessing settlement of America by Europeans. So yes, to that extent, Thanksgiving is as American as pumpkin pie.

And yet, other cultures do have a version of Thanksgiving. And they had it long before there even was an American nation. There is Pongal among the Tamil, Matsuri in Japan, and Erntedankfest in Germany. Even Sukkot in Judaism is a type of Thanksgiving festival.

These are not exact analogs of American Thanksgiving, but they are each harvest time holy days (or festivals) in which people give their thanks to God (or the gods) for sustaining them through another planting season and for keeping them alive.

One difference between these and our celebration is that many of them focus on worship. The German Erntedankfest is primarily observed by going to church (though some towns do have parades). To the extent that our festival is also about thanking God for our blessings, it is a glorious and important holiday.

However, there is a dark side to be aware of. Maybe two. First, I was surprised to learn that many Native Americans do not observe American Thanksgiving with anything but regret because they see it as a celebration of the destruction of their world. I don't pretend to know if this is the feeling among most Native Americans, but it is a strand of thought, and we would do well to at least acknowledge it.

Second, many in our country view this as the official start to the shopping season for Christmas, a celebration of over-the-top consumption. Even the stuff-yourself-till-you-pop mentality of Thanksgiving Day betrays the paean of gluttony. Then, there is Black Friday, its very name signaling

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the importance of getting as many people as possible to spend as much money as possible on as much junk as possible.

The irony of this consumption model is that it drives us toward an attitude that is the exact opposite of Thanksgiving. Even if we go around the room and say what we're thankful for (not a bad idea), it can be lost if what we're thinking about is snagging one of those 40" TVs at the bargain basement price.

Instead of gratitude, the shopping season can make us resentful of others and depressed about what we don't have (or didn't get) rather than what we do have. It can also nudge us into thinking that our true joy is found in stuff rather than relationships.

Our faith has always warned against undue materialism, always upheld the superiority of relationships over things. Virtually all research into human behavior also supports this. Those who live lives of gratitude and who value people over things are happier and healthier.

So giving thanks is good. Not just this one day a year but every day, as a way of life, as a spiritual discipline. I find it fascinating that the methods by which social scientists say we can live happier and healthier lives are exactly what the church has been saying for centuries. Here are three ways they suggest you approach life:

Use the language of gratitude in your daily life. When you speak thankfully, you begin to think gratefully - and the people around you do, too.

Share why you are grateful. Don't just say that you're thankful or for what you're thankful, but say why you're thankful. This puts meat on the bone, helps you get beyond mere platitudes.

Always keep in mind that happiness comes more from relationships than from possessions.

Those social scientists also suggest that if you want to get a loved one a good Christmas present, why not give them experiences rather than things. I might add that giving them gifts of assistance to those in need (such as our Episcopal Relief and Development gifts) gives much the same experience. Doing things together, helping others together - these are what people hold in their hearts forever.

So if you are looking for a way to be happy, then be thankful. Find ways to be of service - that always brings greater joy. And if you join with friends and loved ones to help, you're in for life-long memories that will make your life all the better.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

Announcements

Between-Service Class for THIS SUNDAY:

This week's Between-Service class focuses on the miracle of **Jesus Feeding the 5,000**. 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!

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.

Please see invitation below:

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

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).

Movie Trip: The Sunday School is planning a trip this Sunday to the movies. They will see either "The Star" or "Wonder" (the group can split up to watch either). Everyone will gather in front of the Roosevelt Cinemas at about 12:45. Tickets for all Matinees are \$6.00 each.

Please contact Valerie Gaulin (vgaulin51@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending.



A

New York

Lamentation

A Play About Slavery in New York

Presented by

The Episcopal Diocese of New York
As it observes a *Year Of Lamentation* for
the Church's culpability in the
enslavement of God's children

Performances

January 21, Christ Church, Staten Island

March 4, Christ Church, Poughkeepsie

September 23, St. Philip's, Harlem

October 14, St. Bartholemew's, White Plains

All performances begin at 3:00 PM

November 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27 Office Closed	28	29 10 AM Morning Prayer 7:00 PM Inquirers	30 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	1	2
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/>

November

- 26 St. Margaret's Church, Staatsburg
- 27 Church of the Holy Nativity, Bronx
- 28 Christ the King Episcopal Church, Stone Ridge
- 29 St. Andrew's Church, Hartsdale
- 30 Brotherhood of Saint Andrew

December

- 1 Diocesan Episcopal AIDS/HIV Committee
- 2 Church of St. Andrew, Staten Island

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.

Please pray for Gloria Golden

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):	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
Birthdays (this coming week):	Melinda Harris, Gary Glancey, Hank Schroeder and Lori Rider-Fenwick
Acolytes:	November 26: Team December 3: Team
Altar Guild:	November 26: Team III December 3: Team I
8 a.m. Readers:	November 26: Julett Butler and Thomas Finnigan December 3: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	November 26: Russell Urban-Mead and Charlotte DeGroff December 3: Wilma Tully and Joann Clark
Ushers:	November 26: Dean Caswell, Audrey Horne December 3: Bill and Regina Ardini
Pledge Clerks:	November 26: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell

December 3: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer: November 26: Judy Douglass, Patty Drake, Jeff Fishwick
December 3: Sylvia Erlandson, Ann Farrell and Ray Farrell and Mike,
Lori and Bill Fenwick
Coffee Hour Hosts: November 26: Brian Rance, Saira Shahani
December 3: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil

This Week's Lectionary

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Psalm 100
Ephesians 1:15-23
Matthew 25:31-46

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 555 Lead On O King Eternal
Sequence: 596 Judge Eternal, Throned in Splendor
Offertory: Fanfare for Christ the King
Communion: 324 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
Recessional: 460 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (November 19, 2017)

"Time, Talent, and Fear"

I know we're not quite there yet, but Happy Thanksgiving. If you're traveling, I wish you Godspeed.

Actually, today we do have a couple of things to be thankful for. One is that we are having a baptism. The other is that you should have received a pledge card in the mail this week (and if you didn't, see me - we have extras!).

I know what you're thinking... And it's NOT, "Am I really supposed to be thankful for a pledge card?" What you're thinking is, "What do Stewardship and Baptism have in common?"

More than you might think. And today's gospel ties it all together.

See, in Stewardship, you often hear the phrase, Time, Talent, and Treasure, as in, that's what you're supposed to give to God. Well, today's gospel is similar: it's all about Time, Talent, and Fear.

Only, these are the things we have to deal with in our lives as baptized followers of Christ.

To explain, let's revisit the story. Jesus says the Kingdom is like a boss who gives money in differing amounts to three employees. He gives them talents, and in modern terms a talent is about what an average worker earns in a year, so a lot. They're supposed to be good stewards of that money, though the boss leaves it up to them how.

Then he leaves - for how long, they don't know. When he returns, he sees that two have used the money to make more while one was afraid and did nothing with it. Other than get his boss mad.

But you can see the three elements.

Time: what this story tells us is that we do not and can not know how much time we have. Jesus was addressing the question of when the "day of the Lord" might be. You know, the second coming, the rapture, the end of the world - whatever you want to call it.

And Jesus says, "Who knows?" It's unknowable. And it doesn't matter. None of us knows how much time we have in this world - only that we have right now to do the work God has given us.

So, Jesus calls us to be good stewards of our time. Being one of the baptized means not worrying about how long we have but using this very moment to love, to make the world a little better, and to know the joy of God which is all around.

Talent: like I said, back then a Talent was money. Lots of money. Today the word means what we're good at. Yet both mean that which God has given us and what we in turn have to offer God. Our options are to either grow it or to do nothing and let it choke. It's like a seed. Do you take a chance on growing - even though it might fail - or do you let it lie there stagnant. The Stewardship analogy is obvious. But stewardship of our gifts is at the core of our baptismal covenant as well. When we are baptized, we offer our very selves to God. We offer up to God what God has put in our trust. Whether money or skill, it's not for any of us to keep for ourselves.

Baptism, like Stewardship, is an awesome responsibility that never ends, and we only enter into it because our commitment to the Kingdom is so powerful, because our love for God in Christ is so strong.

Fear: The real point of today's gospel was fear.

Fear is often what stops us from following Christ just as fear stops us from giving ourselves. We fear we'll mess up. We fear we won't have enough. We fear ridicule. We fear for our safety. That was what drove the "lazy" servant into inaction. He was paralyzed by fear.

This seems like a harsh gospel, and in truth, taken alone, it could make you more afraid of God, not less. But taken together with the other parables, with the miracles, with the teachings of Christ and with his own self-giving, we see that Jesus is encouraging, well, courage in a harsh world.

Because it takes courage to follow where he leads. It always has. It will take courage for Andrew just as it takes courage for you and me.

Just this morning, Liz and I were listening to a radio program about Syracuse University Football back in 1970. It was about nine African American players who grew increasingly frustrated with being treated badly by the team. They were not allowed to use the team doctor but were assigned a gynecologist (yes, a gynecologist) who preferred not to touch them - when he did, he wore a double layer of latex gloves and primarily prescribed for them ice and rest.

When they played, they were not allowed to have more than three black players on the field at a time because officials did not want to game to "turn black." When they traveled to the south, they were often not allowed to play at all. And of course, there wasn't even a black assistant coach.

Finally, they began to protest their treatment, initially by boycotting practice one day (this is after they had gone to the coach with their concerns and been told to shut up). After that, the coach told them to tow the line, or they would be off the team. They got threats and insults from Alumni and students alike. They boycotted again, and the coach was ready to strip them of their scholarships - but the chancellor told him that, while he could stop them from playing, he would not take away their scholarships. So, they did not play, but they did get their degrees.

In 2006, the university asked them to attend a game - and at that game, the university formally apologized and praised them for their foresight and fortitude in the face of atrocious treatment. It does take courage to follow where Christ leads - then and now.

Fortunately, we have much to be thankful for because no matter how much time we have in this world, Christ promises that he is with us the whole way. We are thankful that God has trusted us with this great responsibility of making his love known, not that we have such great talent - the amount we have is irrelevant - but that the sincere giving of ourselves is always enough.

And we can be thankful that in a harsh world, God has given us each other to strengthen, the Teach, to encourage, to support and to delight each other. We don't know how much time we have, but we have now. We don't all have the same talent (whether money or skill), but we have enough. We might face the fears of that one employee, but we do not face them alone. That's our understanding both of stewardship and of what it means to be one of the baptized. And for that, we are thankful. Amen.

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