

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: December 2, 2018

First Sunday of Advent

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

NOTICE: Worship Continues in the Parish Hall.

This Sunday, we begin the great journey of Advent. This is the season when we prepare for God to give God's self to us in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God Incarnate.

This is the journey of preparing ourselves for the arrival of Christ, not only as an infant in a stable but as our Savior in our hearts. This is the journey from fear to love in our relationship with God, and it all starts with God becoming as vulnerable as a baby. Now THAT is self-giving.

Of course, as we mentioned last week, it is also the start of our own personal journeys, of our self-giving TO God. So throughout this season, we will be asking ourselves, "How Do I give myself to God?" You don't have to have an answer right away, but it is important to ask the question.

Throughout this holy Season, we will have "witnesses" who will share how they give themselves to God. You will also have the opportunity to reflect on your own self-giving in the form of cards you'll find in your bulletins. These cards give you just a tiny bit of space to write down how you think you might be giving yourself to God. You can turn these cards in, and we'll publish them (anonymously or with your name - your choice) either in the bulletin, Epistle, or on the church's Facebook page (again, your choice). If you just don't know, take the card home and ponder it through the week. If you can think of several ways you give yourself to God, write down a new one each week! You're not limited to one.

This theme of giving ourselves to God does coordinate with Stewardship, but also with every aspect of our life together. The nominating committee is even now seeking candidates to fill the spots opening up on Vestry next year. That's a form of giving yourself. There are countless ministries here at St. James' from Pledge Clerks to Altar Guild to Acolytes to Choir, to Reading Adventures, to Outreach, and of course to Buildings and Grounds...

There are other ways to give ourselves.

Indeed, every time we come to worship, we are giving up a bit of ourselves in order to be filled with God's presence and transformed by God's Holy Spirit.

That's why we have added new worship opportunities. Not only do we have worship on Sunday, but we have Evening Prayer at the Chapel on Tuesday evenings (6:30 PM). We have Morning Prayer in the Wilks Room (for now) on Wednesdays at 10:00 AM. And we have Bible Study on Thursdays at 11:00 AM.

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So write something down on those little cards. They help us put the coming of this little child into perspective — and give that nativity the power it deserves!

NOTES ON ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

As we begin Advent, there are a couple of things you'll want to be aware of at the 10:00 AM service:

We're still in the Parish Hall, but we are once again using the Advent Worship booklet. You won't have to lug the big Prayer Book around. We are also changing our Taizé Communion hymn and will practice it at the beginning of the service.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will be at the Chapel (10 E. Market Street). We have determined that the parking and seating is sufficient, and it is a beautiful setting. Also, AA has used the Parish Hall on Monday evenings for decades, and we feel disrupting their meeting at a sensitive time of the year might be harmful to them.

You will have a glorious Christmas Eve at the Chapel, and we will also welcome the Christ Child into the world and into our hearts! Please invite your friends and family — don't assume they won't come! The more we reach out in God's love, the more love there is. That's our mission. That's one great way to give yourself to God.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

Announcements

This week's Inquirers Class:

This week, our class is, "What Is The Episcopal Church?" What's the difference between us and other Christians? Why do we even have denominations?

Between The Service Classes Begin Again:

This Sunday, we start a four-part series on the Creeds, Especially the Nicene Creed. This week, we take a quick overview and look at the section about God the Father. Currently, class is in the Wilks Room. If Star Presents take up too much room, we'll move to another classroom.

Women's Group Holiday TEA:

Remember the Women's Holiday Tea this Sunday at 3:00 PM at Cranberry's.

The tea is on the same day as the Hyde Park Tree Lighting Ceremony, so we can go as a group to this community event.

If you have questions, please contact Patty Glancey or Liz Granados.

As a reminder, we will still do the gift exchange! Please bring a Christmas ornament or decoration that you have either made, are re-gifting, or purchased for around \$5.

It's Pageant Time!

Look for a sign-up sheet this Sunday to be part of the Epiphany Pageant. The pageant this year will be part of a potluck supper on **January 5**. Think of it as holy dinner theater! All are welcome to sign up, and you get to pick (or create!) your role. It's a good time to have some fun!

December 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26 Office Closed	27 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	28 10 AM Morning Prayer 7 PM Vestry	29 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	30 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	1
2 Unction 3 PM Women's Christmas Tea	3 Office Closed	4 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	5 10 AM Morning Prayer	6 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	7 Office Closed FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	8 8 AM Cookie/ Candy Sale
9 8 AM at Chapel	10 Office Closed	11 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	12 10 AM Morning Prayer	13 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	14 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	15 8 AM Men's Breakfast / Christmas Tree setup 10 AM Greening
16	17 Office Closed	18 7 PM Vestry	19 10 AM Morning Prayer 2:00 PM. Hyde Park Assisted Living Eucharist	20	21 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	22
23 30 Zocchi Baptism	24 Office Closed 5 & 10 PM Christmas Eve Services 31 Office Closed	25 Christmas Office Closed 10 AM Service at Chapel	26 10 AM Morning Prayer	27 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	28 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	29

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.

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/>

- 2 Holy Cross Church, Yonkers
- 3 Church of the Intercession, Manhattan
- 4 Church of St. Matthew & St. Timothy, Manhattan
- 5 Diocesan Accessibility Committee
- 6 Church of St. Nicholas-on-the-Hudson, New Hamburg
- 7 St. Ambrose Church, Manhattan
- 8 Church of St. Mary-in-the-Highlands, Cold Spring

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ashley, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Mariel Carter, Joanne Clark, 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 Ginerio 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):	Beverly O'Halloran, Melinda B. Harris, Gary Glancey, Hank Schroeder and Lori Rider-Fenwick
Birthdays (this coming week):	Bonnie Foote, Saira Shahani and Patricia Weber
Acolytes:	December 2: Russell Urban-Mead and Braeden Hall December 9: Nancy Montero and Jaylen Thatcher
Altar Guild:	December 2: Team II December 9: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	December 2: Shannon Butler and Sue DeLorenzo December 9: Deb Belding and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	December 2: Russell Urban-Mead and Nancy Montero December 9: Wilma Tully and Justin Bohlmann
Ushers:	December 2: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher December 9: Andrew and Tanya Hall
Pledge Clerks:	December 2: Joanne Lown and Sue DeLorenzo December 9: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	December 2: Mary Gabel and Elizabeth Gabel, Gail Ganter-Toback December 9: Mary Jo Garlo and Peter Francese; Valerie, Steve and Kasey Gaulin
Coffee Hour Hosts:	December 2: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil December 9: Jodi Triola and Mike Fenwick

This Week's Lectionary

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:1-9

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 497 - How bright appears the Morning Star

Sequence: 67 - Comfort, comfort, ye my people

Offertory: The King Shall Come

Communion: Taizé 28: Come and Fill

Recessional: 72 - Hark! The Glad Sound

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

"What Is A King?"

Yesterday, I was at a regional council meeting talking about the possibility of having a Mid-Hudson Region Revival — including our presiding bishop as preacher.

When we talked about possible venues — people were mentioning places like the Bardavon, the Civic Center, Dutchess Stadium. I said, "How're we supposed to fill the *stadium*? The reply? "We've got the Royal wedding preacher. They'll be lined up down the street."

And people HAVE BEEN lining up to hear him ever since the royal wedding. Why? Because he's a great preacher - but also because Americans are some of the biggest fans of the British Royal family. Well, of royalty in general.

Ever notice how we give our heroes royal titles: The King of Rock and Roll, the Queen of Soul, the Sultan of Swat, King James.

Even in this nation's early years, the founders considered having a king. And why? Because up till then, that's mostly what people knew.

That's why we have all that king language in the Bible. And that's why we called the Sunday before Advent "Christ the King." (That, and "Christ the President" just doesn't have a ring to it)

But what is a king or queen? What does it mean to *be* a king? What does it mean to *have* a king? How did Jesus understand it when Pilate asked him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" How did the church understand it when they decided to call Jesus "Christ the King"?

And the question you want to keep in the back of your mind — what does it mean for YOU to call Christ YOUR king?

But first, a quick detour. One of my favorite series of books growing up was the *Narnia* books by CS Lewis. My favorite of the series was probably the least known one called "The Horse and His Boy." In it, a poor boy is discovered to be the long lost crown prince. His newly discovered father tells him that he will someday be king.

This doesn't sit well with the boy, who tells the current king to find someone else. "No," says the king. "The King's under the law, for it's the law makes him a king. Hast no more power to start away from thy crown than any sentry from his post."

Nevertheless, he says, the boy is wise to not want kingship "For this is what it means to be a king: to be first in every desperate attack and last in every desperate retreat, and when there's hunger in the land (as must be now and then in bad years) to wear finer clothes and laugh louder over a scantier meal than any man in your land."

CS Lewis has a rather idealized understanding of monarchs. Certainly not the idea many of *us* have when we say we want to be king or queen for a day so we can make the world look the way we want.

Lewis believed Monarchs belonged to the people, that their lives were not their own. This belief was not based on British royalty, mind you. Even though there were some very conscientious kings and queens, there were just as many scoundrels and villains. Game of Thrones was modeled after *something*, after all. No, what Lewis saw as the ideal king was modeled after none other than Jesus.

Because Jesus told Pilate that his Kingdom was not of this world. Because Jesus let go of earthly power in order to testify to the truth. Because for Jesus, a king was one who led the way home to God's love, one who never demanded of his followers what he would not first do himself, one who cared for his followers like a mother cares for her children.

One other aspect of monarchy is important to both Lewis and our understanding of Christ as King: Kings and Queens are hereditary and LIFE LONG. It's not a job — it's an identity. Your only choice is to be a good one or not.

And as Jesus says repeatedly in the gospels, the one who would be great must be a servant to all.

Which leads us to our second question: What does it mean to HAVE a queen or king? Because even though we're Americans, we *choose* to claim Christ as our King. And we do it right before Advent, the season when we prepare for that King to be become one of us, to be born in a stable among the very poor.

Are we *sure* we want to be the vassals of royalty?

To vow allegiance to a king or queen means to accept them as your primary ruler. You put them above others.

In earlier days, monarchs weren't mere figureheads but had power over every aspect of life. To follow meant that when they called you to war, you fought. When they proclaimed a feast, you celebrated. When they taxed you, you paid.

Most people couldn't choose their king or queen. But we can. We choose Jesus at our baptism, when we answer, "I do" to the question: "Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?" We reaffirm that choice at confirmation. And we repeat it several times through the year.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will...

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

I will...

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

I will...

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will...

So, what is a king? The one we choose to follow and serve. The real question — which I leave with you to ponder as we prepare for Christ's coming is that what you choose? 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?