

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: December 3, 2017

First Sunday of Advent

Bible Verse

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence-- as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil-- to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!"

- Isaiah 64:1-2

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

There are days when I wish God would “tear open the heavens and come down.” There are days when I get tired of the increased incivility in public discourse. There are days when I get worn down by the daily barrage of questions about our faith - starting with whether God exists at all. And there are days when I get tired of all the normal worries that we all have - Can we pay our bills? Is our insurance enough? How will we cope with the roof? Or the mold? There are days when I just need to know, how did God allow this (whatever your this is) to happen?

There are days when I have no answers and not enough energy to pursue the questions. And then I look up to the heavens and say “now would be a good time to tear open those heavens.”

This was the cry of Isaiah all those millennia ago. It is a cry of exasperation but also expectation. And of hope. That’s important to me. In all the difficulties of my life, there is always that hope. God will come anew. God already has come. In fact, God is with us now.

Isaiah knew that life is difficult but that God never abandons us even when it feels like it.

That’s what the Season of Advent is all about. God’s promise to be with us in all things. It’s a time of expectant waiting but also of gratitude that Christ already came to us to show us the way. And of hope and trust that He will come again (in whatever form at whatever time) to lead us home.

All very fuzzy language, I know, but some things just aren’t concrete. Expectation, hope, trust - those aren’t things you can put a price tag on or quantify. They are ways of being, and Advent calls us to be people who watch and wait, who are always looking for Christ in the other, for Christ’s action in the world, for opportunities to serve Christ even when the days seems dark.

It’s no accident that we have chosen the first Sunday of Advent for our “Ingathering Sunday.” Stewardship is an act of hope, of trust, of expectation. We trust that God is doing a good work through us and that our participation in the Body of Christ will help lead us home.

We expect that our life together will touch not only our own lives but those of the surrounding community. We hope that we - as the Beloved Community - will continue to be a place of Light, of Peace, of Joy, and of Wonder.

So, in this season of expectation - whether in joy or exasperation - know that God has been, is, and will be with us. I pray your pledge will reflect your hope and trust, but also that your Advent observation will do the same. Let us look forward to Christ's coming - the one that was, that is, and that is to come.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

Stewardship

St. James' Episcopal Church, Hyde Park Our Pledge to the Ministry Given Us by Jesus Christ

In support of St. James' and in thanksgiving to God
I/We commit _____ per week month year
for a total of \$ _____ in 2018.

I would like to serve the church as a volunteer _____
(please note area of interest)

I would like pledge envelopes

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Ingathering Sunday is December 3. Please bring your filled-out card to church that day so we can offer it up to God's service. Or you can mail in your card prior to that at the address below.

4526 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538 • 845-229-2820 • stjamesoffice@stjameshydepark.org

Announcements

Between-Service Class for THIS SUNDAY:

This week's Between-Service class focuses on the miracle of **The Wedding in Cana**. 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!

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.

Greening of the Church:

Join us for the Greening of the Church on **Saturday morning, December 16** as we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. Men from the **Men's Breakfast** (8:00 AM that day at Cranberry's) will stop by to help between 9:30 and 10:00 AM.

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).

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.



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

The Churches of the Diocese of New York have been asked to be part of this Farmworker Fair Labor Human Rights Hearing on January 17. The hope is that each church will send one clergy person and two parishioners. Please let Fr. Chuck know if you are interested in participating.

Farmworker Fair Labor Human Rights Hearing

SAVE THE DATE!

Join the Justice for Farmworkers Legislative Campaign on
January 17, 2018 at 10 AM at the Legislative Office Building (LOB) WELL at the Albany State Capitol for

*A Farmworker Fair Labor Hearing:
An Inquiry into the Ethical Treatment of Farmworkers in the State of New York*

For more information email: JoseChapaJFW@gmail.com



Co-Sponsored by Rural & Migrant Ministry (RMM)
RMM works for the creation of a just and rural New York State by:
Nurturing leadership, Standing with the disenfranchised and
Changing unjust systems and structures.



December 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 1 Advent	4 Office Closed	5	6 10 AM Morning Prayer 7:00 PM Inquirers	7 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	8 7 PM Newcomers Reception	9
10 2 Advent 4 PM Lessons & Carols @ St. Margarets	11 Office Closed 6 PM Women's Group (at Coppola's)	12	13 10 AM Morning Prayer 7:00 PM Inquirers	14 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	15	16 8 AM Men's Breakfast 10 AM Greening Of Church
17 3 Advent Youth Group	18 Office Closed	19 7 PM Vestry	20 10 AM Morning Prayer 2 PM 7:00 PM Inquirers	21 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	22	23
24 4 Advent 6 & 10 PM Christmas Eve	25 Office Closed 10 AM Christmas @ Chapel	26	27 10 AM Morning Prayer	28	29	30

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/>

- 3 St. Martha's Church, Bronx
- 4 St. Joseph of Arimathea Church, Elmsford
- 5 St. Anne's Church, Washingtonville
- 6 Seamen's Church Institute of New York & New Jersey
- 7 Iglesia Virgen de Guadalupe, Poughkeepsie
- 8 Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Manhattan
- 9 The Church Pension Group

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Mariel Carter, Linkin Ewalt, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Hope Jennings, 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, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, 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): Melinda Harris, Gary Glancey, Hank Schroeder and Lori Rider-Fenwick

Birthdays
(this coming week): Bonnie Foote, Saira Shahani and Patricia Weber

Acolytes:
December 3: Team 2
December 10: Team 3

Altar Guild:
December 3: Team I
December 10: Team I

8 a.m. Readers:	December 3: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch December 10: Deb Belding and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	December 3: Wilma Tully and Joann Clark December 10: Patty Caswell and Bobbie Wells
Ushers:	December 3: Bill and Regina Ardini December 10: Patty Drake, Bobbie Wells
Pledge Clerks:	December 3: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass December 10: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	December 3: Sylvia Erlandson, Ann Farrell and Ray Farrell and Mike, Lori and Bill Fenwick December 10: Grant and Shirley Ferris, Jeff Fishwick, Thomas Finnigan and Bonnie Foote and David Foote
Coffee Hour Hosts:	December 3: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil December 10: Jodi Triola, Ross and Connie Eames

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 54 - Savior of the Nation's Come
Sequence: 68 - Rejoice, Rejoice Believers
Offertory: "The King Shall Come"
Communion: 640 - Watchman, Tell Us of the Night
Recessional: 18 (LEVAS) - Swing Low, Swing Chariot

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Last Sunday after Pentecost (Christ the King) (November 26, 2017)

"Both And"

Today's gospel is in a way, the most Anglican of gospels. Why? Because it is a "*Both And*" gospel, and we are a "*Both And*" people.

What I mean is that Anglicans are born out of being *both* Catholic *and* Protestant, right? We are the people of the Via Media, the middle way, the way that sees how we can be *both* one thing *and* at the same time, seemingly the exact opposite. We are a people of contradictions, of tension. It is an uncomfortable position to be in, difficult to explain or even understand.

Then again, today is the **Feast of Christ the King** - the feast day where the one who is *both* human *and* divine, *both* priest *and* sacrifice, the one who is *both* our brother and friend, *and* yet also our Lord and King.

Jesus is both and - and so are we.

We are *both* sheep *and* goats. And this passage is one of *both* comfort *and* warning. Like I said, *Both And* can be uncomfortable and confusing. So let's examine it a bit more closely.

This is one of those stories Jesus tells about the end of times or, as he puts it, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory." If you've ever heard the word "Eschatology" that's what it means - the end of the age, the day of judgment. *This* is an eschatological story, and everyone in Jesus' audience understands what he's talking about: Some day, the holy one will come and judge the people. Everyone will get what they deserve. There's the sheep over here who get heaven, and the goats over there who get hell.

Now, some believe that Matthew included this story because he was writing to a church that was under persecution, and it might seem comforting to them to believe that while they are the good people - the sheep - those who persecute them are goats who will get what's coming to them. Maybe...

Except that there are two *new* features to this story, *Both And* features that make me wonder.

First, Jesus has "all the nations" gathered together. It's not just the believers, not just the Chosen People. And it appears in this telling that many of "those people" are also sheep as well as goats. He doesn't distinguish the nations - they are all one.

In the telling of this parable, Jesus makes clear that ALL people are God's children, and that there are sheep and goats among all - not just Jews (the chosen people) and not just Christians. So nobody's safe just because of who they are.

Second, neither the sheep nor the goats are aware of how their behavior was either good or bad. The goats even suggest in the parable that they're good people. It's like they're saying, "If we had *known* we were doing anything bad, we would have changed. If we had known it was *you*, we would have served you." Sure, persecuting Christians is goatish behavior, but what else is? A lot.

It would seem from Jesus' words, that simply failing - or refusing - to see Christ in the other is pretty goat-like. And if that's the case, we are all doomed because none of us manages to see Christ in the other all the time.

None of us.

Because for every hungry person we've fed, there are many more we've ignored; for every stranger we've welcomed, there are many more we've passed by or even driven away; for every sick person

we've visited, there are many others we've shied away from; and how many of us visit inmates in prison?

Yes, some of us do some of these things some of the time. Maybe we even do some of them all of the time - or all of them some of the time. But there is not person who doesn't fill the role of *both* goat *and* sheep at some time.

In fact, it is impossible to be a sheep all the time. Which would be a terrible thing if it weren't for the fact that Christ is *both* judge *and* merciful.

The comfort in this passage is knowing that while it's impossible to live up to Christ's standards, we are *still* welcomed into the Kingdom of God.

Nevertheless, it is still a passage of warning because it lays out the expectation Jesus has for us who claim to follow him. True, we may be granted a place in the Kingdom, but our treatment of others is to be INDEPENDENT of that knowledge. We are to treat others as Christ NOT because it earns us heaven but because we see Christ in that person.

If we choose to stop seeing Christ in the immigrant, in the inmate, in the poor person, in the sick and dying - then our hearts are in danger of becoming goatish.

So yes, this is a parable of *both* comfort *and* warning. It is the eye of the heart that matters - do we see Christ in the other - believer and unbeliever alike, and do we treat them as such?

How can we possibly respond to this parable?

How about this: Go, spread the good news that God is Love, and make it believable by living it yourself. Independent of reward or punishment - *both* unaware *and* yet fully aware that this is who Christ is calling you to be.

Amen.

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