

# St. James' E-pistle

## February 3, 2017

### **Pulpit Notes**

*"If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail." Isaiah 58:9b-11*

Brothers and Sisters:

I've had to cut way back on Facebook these days. And I'm listening to a lot more classical music instead of my old diet of news radio.

I had to. I may have to take a monastery day real soon, too.

I don't know about you, but with all the screaming and downright depressing news, I need a break. It's just too oppressive, one fight after another when all you want is a little peace. Has that been your experience in these past few months?

If not, if you're invigorated by the combative atmosphere, God bless you. But you've known me a long time now, long enough to know that I prefer avoiding conflict. When I have to confront someone, it takes all my energy, even if it's a small thing. I just take no pleasure in it.

So, I am completely in sympathy with anyone who feels like sticking their head in the sand these days.

One of the things I love about church is that despite our differences - culture, gender, sexual identity, politics or sports team - we can come together and laugh or cry or share a cup of coffee. That's what I always appreciated about our wonderful Lenten Breakfasts - when you share food together, it cuts through all the conflict.

In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of folks come to church to escape all the craziness and contention of the world. Just give me a little conflict-free time!

Church can be and is a place of sanctuary. One of the reasons we keep the church open all day every day is so people can come in and find that peace. As the sign board outside says (when it's not advertising a church event): "Come in, sit, breathe, pray".

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And yet, the concerns of the world can never be far from our thoughts, prayers and actions. The Church, in its ancient wisdom, divided up worship into certain parts. There are the parts that focus solely on praising God (hymns, psalms, the Eucharist). Then there are the parts that focus on the needs of the world (like the Prayers of the People).

And then there's that intersection between them: the scriptures. That's where, no matter what you read, you're going to be challenged in how you live your life, how you treat your neighbor. As a preacher, I have to wrestle publicly with wanting to offer words of peace and comfort, but staying true to what the passage says and what's going on in the world.

So, how do we reconcile our desire for peacefulness - even escape from the world - with what's going on in the world?

Two words: Worship and Service.

We worship to be solely in the presence of God - to be filled, as we are filled with the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. But then we are sent out to "love and serve the Lord."

Sometimes we need to come in and be cared for - just leave all the politics behind. That's fine if that's where you are! Trust me, I get that! Just sit back and let the music carry you along. Let the rhythms of the ancient prayers drown out the cares and craziness of the world outside those doors.

But God never lets us just sit - not for long anyway. Once we're healed sufficiently, once we're filled enough (never as much as we'd like, but...), once we've got the rest we need, God has this way of forcing us to have a look around. Not through the eyes of the world but through the eyes of the Gospel, through the eyes of Jesus Christ. That means we should look at each other with God's love. There is no choice. The immigrant, the refugee, the inmate or ex-con, the potential mugger on the street and the guy who comes to you looking for a loan or a handout, the boss who has no respect for your personal boundaries and the employee who doesn't really care about your business. And of course, the jerk who has those idiotic political views.

We do not have a choice about seeing their lives as important to our own.

I may not be able to deal with them or the issues they raise, and so I come and retreat from the world. But at some point, when I'm ready enough, God will nudge me back into the fray.

That's what church is. A place where we come and go, where we get cared for and bury our heads in the sand for awhile - and also where we get challenged to take seriously the needs of those who can't make it on their own. It's a rhythm that God has given us - being brought in to rest and sent out to serve.

The rest we need will be different for each of us, just as the service we're called to will be different. Just remember one thing. Neither the rest and refreshment we receive nor the

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service we give will ever be perfect, not on this earth anyway. But both are filled with God's grace. And that's good enough for me.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

**Adult Education:** While we had hoped to start a bible-based adult education forum in Lent, I forgot that we have our Lenten Breakfasts between services - and there is no way I will try to compete with those! So, while I'm still looking at some sort of adult education programming during Lent, it won't be between services. However, be prepared for the Easter season! We are going to learn what those books of the bible are all about!

In other Adult Education news, some churches in our area are working to create an adult forum on the relationship between Christianity and Islam. If you are interested in attending such a forum, let me know. If you would like a forum on Islam to be held at St. James', let me know. In the meantime, I'll pass on to you any information I receive about classes of this nature going on in our area.

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### **The News of the Church**

**Ushers Needed:** We are looking for a pair of ushers to fill a hole in the roster. If you can devote a Sunday morning once every other month or so, please contact Bobbie Wells. Thanks!

**Feast of Absalom Jones:** St. Paul's, Poughkeepsie (161 Mansion Street) will celebrate an Evening Prayer Service in remembrance of Absalom Jones on Sunday afternoon, February 12, 2017 at 4:00 pm. The Rev. Dr. C. Allan Ford (Vicar of St. Margaret's, Staatsburg) will be the homilist. All are welcome. Light refreshments will be served after the service. There is ample parking in the church lot.

If you would like further information, please call St. Paul's Office - [845-452-8440](tel:845-452-8440)

**Women's Group:** The St. James Women's Group will meet for the first time for coffee/tea and/or dessert on **Monday, February 13 at 7:00 p.m. at the Eveready Diner** in Hyde Park. Please join us for conversation and cheer! Let us know if you plan to attend so that we can advise the diner--but you are certainly welcome if you decide at the last minute! --Patty Glancey and Regina Ardini

**Next Fireside Chat:** Our next Fireside Chat lecture will be: "The River at Risk." It deals with the many pressures put on our Hudson River and how we can act to. This new lecture will be **Thursday, February 16 at 7:00 pm** - at the Chapel, of course!

**Lenten Programming:** Let us prepare for Lent. Already, the sign up sheet is available for the Lenten Meditation booklet. Please sign up for a day that you would like to write your meditation.

Next, we are instituting daily Morning Prayer throughout Lent. I am in the process of putting together a team of volunteer Morning Prayer leaders who will make sure that each morning, there will be someone there to worship with you. We hope that a sizeable number of parishioners will choose at least one day a week this Lent to start the day out right!

Finally, we are acting as a host site for the Trinity Institute's Conference on Water Justice in March. There is an accompanying Lenten program for all (regardless of whether you attend the conference). We are considering incorporating that program into our life here. Stay Tuned!

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*Let' Grow Together!*

*The Hyde Park Community Garden*

*Kick-Off Meeting*

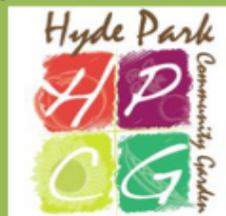
*7:00 PM Feb. 23, 2017*

*St. James' Chapel*

*10 East Market Street, Hyde Park*

*For Info Call 229-0153*

*Join us for our 6<sup>th</sup> Season!*



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**St. James' Hosting Trinity Institute Simulcast:** St. James' is excited to be one of two Midhudson Valley sites hosting a simulcast of this year's Trinity Institute Conference which takes place March 22-24. The Trinity Institute is a three-day conference attracting participants from around the world. Each year it focuses on one topic of importance to people of faith. This year's conference is titled: "Water Justice" and centers on the sacredness of water and the necessity of protecting it so we can all live. From the Trinity Institute website: "Water is a gift. Water is life. As water crises increase, access to safe and clean drinking water decreases.

From Flint to Standing Rock, many of today's most pressing social issues revolve around water. Faith communities worldwide can help."

The simulcast will take place in the parish hall. We encourage everyone to be part of this - for all three days if possible, but for one day if that's all you can do.

**Some Diocesan Dates of Interest:** It is important to be in communion with other Episcopalians in our diocese. While many events are held in New York City, some are more regionally available. Here are a few events that you may be interested in.

- February 11, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM - Safe Church Training (in Tarrytown)\*
- February 11, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM - Blessed Absalom Jones Celebration (Cathedral)
- March 18, 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM - Eucharistic Minister/Eucharistic Visitor Training (in Cornwall)

**Churchyard Committee:** Our churchyard committee wants you. The committee oversees one of the most historic graveyards in the region, and is responsible for making sure it is kept up. It handles the sale and digging of graves as well. If you value our churchyard and want it to continue to be a source of comfort whose loved ones rest here as well as historical interest to

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those who visit, please join our committee. If you're interested, you can contact Carol Vinall at [vinehall3@aol.com](mailto:vinehall3@aol.com).

**DONATE YOUR iPad!** Please consider donating your old iPad - or any old tablet that can read a PDF file - to St. James'. We would like to have three or four tablets so we can download the digital bulletin onto them and let guests (or parishioners, of course) use them. This is especially helpful to those who are unfamiliar with the liturgy and all the books we use. You should erase everything on it, of course - all we need is a PDF reader and a browser (to download the information). Thanks!

### **Spiritual / Educational Online Resources to deepen your faith:**

- Acts 8 Movement
  - GrowChristians
  - Episcopal Cafe (a favorite)
  - The Slate Project (not affiliated with Slate magazine)
  - Virtual Abbey
  - Second Life Church (gives you a virtual church experience if you're into that sort of thing. Fun to look at maybe).
  - Inward/Outward (daily meditations sent to your e-mail)
  - "Edge of Enclosure" (weekly lectionary-based blog post)
  - The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook)
  - Anne Lamott (via Facebook)
  - Fr. Richard Rohr's blog <https://cac.org/richard-rohr/richard-rohr-ofm/>
  - Jan Richardson - <http://paintedprayerbook.com>
- Especially good for those grieving or interested in women's spirituality.

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February 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5	6 Office Closed	7	8 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	9 11 AM Bible Study  3:30 Reading Adventures	10	11
12 4:00 PM Absolom Jones Ceremony	13 Office Closed 7:00 PM Women's Group	14 <u>Valentine's Day</u>	15 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	16 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures 7:00 PM Fireside Chat	17	18 8 AM Men's Breakfast
19	20 Office Closed	21 7:00 PM Vestry	22 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	23 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures 7:00 PM Comm. Garden kick- off	24	25
26	27 Office Closed	28 6:30 PM Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper				

### **The News of the Diocese**

**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 <http://www.diocesen.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

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- 5 St. Paul's Church, Bronx
- 6 St. Paul's Church, Staten Island
- 7 St. Barnabas' Church, Ardsley
- 8 New York Intern Program and The Episcopal Service Corps
- 9 Diocesan Credit Union Task Force
- 10 Pastoral Counselors and Therapists of the Diocese
- 11 Diocesan Anti-Racism Committee

### **Praying For Peace Everywhere:**

Let us continue to light a candle for peace in the Holy Land - and everywhere. Prayer is our most potent antidote to hatred.

#### **1. Candle for Peace**

Please also light a candle on Fridays - holy to both faiths - for Peace

Let us Light Candles for Peace

Two mothers, one plea:

Now, more than ever, during these days of so much crying,  
on the day that is sacred to both our religions, Friday, Sabbath Eve

Let us light a candle in every home - for peace:

A candle to illuminate our future, face to face,

A candle across borders, beyond fear.

From our family homes and houses of worship

Let us light each other up,

Let these candles be a lighthouse to our spirit

Until we all arrive at the sanctuary of peace.

#### **2. The Mothers Prayer:**

God of Life:

You who heals the broken hearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:

For our children crying in the night,

For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.

For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?

With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at these harsh times

I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.

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Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one for another.

Inscribe our lives in the book of Life

For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.

For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,

May this be your will

And let us say Amen.

*Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum  
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie*

AN UNOFFICIAL LETTER From Bishop Mary Glasspool:

*Note: Bishop Glasspool, our assistant bishop, sends out regular musings to the clergy - unofficial with no agenda other than to keep in touch. I hope you enjoy, too!*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,



O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. "For the Human Family", Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

On February 27, 2013, I traveled with an interfaith group of religious leaders from San Diego, California to Tijuana, Mexico to witness, firsthand, the myriad of issues that erupt at the border between Mexico and the United States. I took this picture (and others) on the Mexican side of the border close to the Pacific Ocean where there is a park named Friendship Park. Friendship Park is the site of many tearful meetings and partings as families and friends attempt to see one another and sometimes even touch through a tightly built and carefully guarded iron mesh fence that is one of at least three such barriers built at the border near San

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Diego and Tijuana. What do we, as Christians, have to say about walls and fences? How does our Faith inform such discussions?

The Christian message came into this world at a time of great division and upheaval for the Jewish People. The growing Roman Empire spent 70 years subduing Jewish revolts in the Middle East, and the first followers of the Jesus Movement were often assailed both from within and without. The Christian message was one of peace-making and unity, because of what God had done through Jesus, the Christ. Even "secular" philosophers such as Epictetus (50 - 135 CE) were beginning to teach that human society could no longer afford to remain divided. The image of the body - one entity composed of several distinct but interrelated parts - was emerging at the time of New Testament writers. It was the Apostle Paul's major contribution to religious development to make this teaching the central organizing principle of his missionary and pastoral ministry. It is captured best in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) And the writer of Ephesians puts it this way: "For (Christ) is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us." (Eph. 2:14)

Walls can ensure privacy, safety, and security. With stones, wood, bricks, and mortar we build dwellings in which we can live and rest and find renewed strength. When we talk individually about personal "space" we use the word "boundaries." It is important to have identifiable and appropriate boundaries as individuals and in larger groupings of people. But walls or barricades are also built to fence out those who are different and threatening. Too often these walls are built with hatred, prejudice, anger, and fear. The peace that Christ gives is also destructive: it tears down walls that keep people apart. It breaks down the dividing wall of hostility. Instead, a new kind of house is built. With Christ as the cornerstone and foundation, we are all joined together to form the dwelling place for God. This metaphor refers to more than church buildings. There are no strangers or aliens in the household of God. And there are no walls! The Eucharistic table is set for friends and strangers alike. Reconciled to God and one another, we are free to tear down the walls that divide us from one another. There is no need for walls. The foundation is the only security we need! Can we do this?

Can we, as Christians, help tear down the walls of hostility that we, in fact, have helped to build even among ourselves? Can we place our security firmly and solely on Jesus, the Christ, the foundation and cornerstone of our Faith? I hope so. I offer you all my daily prayers as together we strive for the Reign of God. +Mary

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**Please keep the following people in your prayers:**

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Dee, Linkin Ewalt, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Charles Pardee, Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), John Ross, Richard Secor, 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 alright.*

Birthdays (this past week):	Kasey Gaulin and David Wardell, Jr.
Birthdays (this coming week):	Andrew Gausepohl, Cathi Tegtmeier, Doris Mack, Paul O'Halloran and William Fenwick
Acolytes:	February 5: Team 1 February 12: Team 2
Altar Guild:	February 5: Team I February 12: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	February 5: Debbie Belding and Jim Smyth February 12: Lucille Ogden and Thomas Finnigan
10 a.m. Readers:	February 5: Donna Beyer/Maggie McNamara February 12: Patty Caswell/Justin Bohlmann
Ushers:	February 5: Donna and John Beyer February 12: Dean Caswell, Audrey Horne
Pledge Clerks:	February 5: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright February 12: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass

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Parish Cycle of Prayer: February 5: Kim Illuminate, Hope Jennings, Jada Jennings  
February 12: Pat Keeffe, Peter Khan  
Coffee Hour Hosts: February 5: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil  
February 12: Jodi Triola, Ross and Connie Eames

### **This Week's Lectionary**

Isaiah 58:1-9a, [9b-12]  
Psalm 112:1-9, [10]  
1 Corinthians 2:1-12, [13-16]  
Matthew 5:13-20

### **This Week's Hymns**

Processional: "Judge eternal, throned in splendor" (#596)  
Sequence: "Lord God, you now have set your servant free" (#499)  
Offertory Anthem: "O Light of Light" (#134)  
Communion: "O Food to pilgrims given" (#308)  
Recessional: "Put forth, O God, thy Spirit's might" (#521)

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

Sermon Preached on  
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany  
(January 29, 2017)

### "What Blessing Really Means"

When I was a kid back in Illinois, my mom had this phrase for whenever we said something with great certainty but that was in fact naive or outright dumb. She'd say, "Well bless your pointed little head."

Never quite knew what that meant. But you can bet that blessing left us feeling a little less sure of ourselves.

Later, as an adult living in North Carolina, we learned another phrase. Getting "Blessed Out." As in, "My mother really blessed me out after I broke that window." At first I thought, well isn't

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that sweet of your mother, despite you doing something wrong, she -- ohhh. (Took me awhile, but I finally got it)

When you hear "blessing" used like this, you can be forgiven for being a little uncertain what the word really means.

Truth is, even though I send you out of here each week with a blessing, you probably don't give a lot of thought to what it really means.

Most people think when you get a blessing, that means happy things are headed your way. Wouldn't that be nice? But if you read the scriptures, you get a sense that it's more complicated than that.

Remember Abraham? God blessed him - and then drove him from his home forever. And when his grandson Jacob received his blessing, he had to run for his life - never to see his parents again.

But perhaps no passage puts blessing into sharp focus like today's gospel.

Blessed are the poor in spirit (or in Luke's version, the just plain poor).

Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. And here's the kicker: Blessed those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. And Jesus follows that up with Blessed are YOU when people revile you and curse you and utter all kinds of evil falsely against you on my account.

Blessing just sounds better and better all the time.

So, if blessing doesn't mean no pain, and it doesn't mean easy times or no conflict, what does it mean?

Put simply, real blessing means pleasing God.

Let's back up a bit to see what I mean. The prophet Micah was facing a real mess. He was from Judah in the south, but Israel in the north was being attacked by Assyria. Refugees from Israel were flooding in to Judah, and the Judeans weren't too happy about it.

To Micah, pretty much everyone is doing wrong. The Assyrians, but also the Israelite leaders because their militarism and arrogance were making things worse. And the Judeans for their stinginess against neighbors in need as well as their supreme confidence in their own religious rituals, which they felt would save them from any attack. Micah's response to all this?

Will all your stinginess please God? Will your self-righteousness please God? No! What does the Lord require but to do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with your God.

Which brings us back to the Gospel. Because THIS is the kind of blessing Jesus is talking about. To be blessed is to have the desire and the wisdom and the means and the strength to please God. Let me repeat that: blessing means to please God.

So if we look at Jesus' beatitudes, we realize that these are things that please God. But even then, some of it's hard to grasp.

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I mean, sure, if you're poor in spirit, that could mean that you know you need God, and that could please God. But what about Luke's version? Blessed are the poor? Really? But it is generally those with the least who know their need for God. The more we have, the more we tend to believe owe it all to our hard work and intelligence - and the farther away we drift from God.

But how about mourning. How can losing someone you love please God? Mourning is one of the greatest signs of love. Know what one of the saddest things I've seen is? A funeral with no mourners. Those tears are a sign of love - and that is much better than never having had that love in the first place. Remember the Wizard of Oz? When Dorothy leaves, the Tin Man says, "Now I know I have a heart because it's breaking." It's that deep love that pleases God.

Now, the meek - those who are not arrogant but live life as it comes... They please God precisely because they see the world as it is, not as they think it should be. When we're caught up in how we think everything should be, we often lose sight of what God is already doing - and then we begin to think we alone can do it right. That's what Micah was complaining about.

Let's look at those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and the merciful, and the pure in heart, and the peacemakers together. Like Micah's call to do justice and love kindness, these are the ways to be part of God's kingdom and to bring it a step closer on earth. It is both in personal life and in how we serve and treat others.

Having mercy is doing God's will. Sowing peace is doing God's will. Focusing on God in everything we do pleases God.

We can extend this out a bit by looking at what else Jesus commanded. Like loving our enemies, caring for the poor and the outcast, healing the sick...these are all doing God's will and are therefore things that please God - and therefore blessings.

However, blessing does not mean easy because we live in a world where God's will is not the world's. As St. Paul said, the message of the cross is foolishness to the world. So there will be backlash.

When Christians reach out to refugees - as is part of our ancient mission - the world will condemn. When Christians forge time to be with God, the world will call us lazy (or deluded). When Christians embrace all in love despite culture or wealth or gender or political persuasion - the world says, "Fools! They are not like us!"

But - they are God's children. All of them. And if Jesus teaches us anything, it's that what pleases God more than anything is when we love God and love each other as we love ourselves. So, despite the real world consequences we can face for loving others - hatred, violence, jail, maybe even death - our very act of loving pleases God beyond our ability to measure. And that is all the blessing we'll ever need. Amen.