

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: August 27, 2017

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Bible Verse

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Romans 12:2

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We live in a complex and confusing world. You can quote me on that. You can also quote me when I say that's never going to change.

The to-do we have been witnessing over Confederate statues is a relatively small blip in the matter of human conflict. Not that I take it any less seriously - we have seen a pretty ugly side of our country and want - need - to work toward a just, grace-filled, and reconciling end.

But in the research I've been doing for various projects, I am reminded that the vicious comments you sometimes see in the comment sections of websites are pretty much on par with the vicious comments people have been lobbing at each other in, say, the pre-revolutionary tracts or the various antebellum publications defending or excoriating slavery. They all sound very similar.

And somewhere in the middle were the majority of people wringing their hands and saying, "I just don't what the right thing to do is!" Frankly, though each of us *wants* to be a good person, wants to be on the "right side of history," we simply don't know which way society will go.

So...what to do? What to do?

Listen to Paul on this one. Don't be conformed to the world - be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God. Seriously. Who among us thinks the news we see each day is the will of God? Who among us is arrogant enough to think they have all the answers? We see world leaders fumbling around looking lost - or looking out for themselves.

Is that any way to run a world? But Paul says to not be conformed to the world. Not be conformed to the animosity against those we think are wrong. The world right now is saying that people who either want to get rid of or keep Confederate statues are evil. The world right now says immigrants (especially undocumented) are evil.

On Wednesday, I got a peculiar email from someone I did not know condemning me for the sign in front of our church - the one that reads, "Love Your Neighbor (Everyone's Your Neighbor). He

said, "How dare you tell me to love my neighbor when there are filthy illegals who don't deserve it? God is ashamed of you."

That was the world speaking. The world tells us that whatever we do is right, and whatever they do is wrong, but even more - *they* are bad. I believe as a Christian, we are obligated to oppose injustice where we see it. We are also called to humility, accepting the possibility that we may have to reevaluate our aims and/or our methods from time to time. And always, whether marching or lobbying congress or serving in the food pantry, always striving to see Christ in the other.

I will add one other note that may feel like a commercial. So be it. I learn much from the study of history, as I noted above in discussing how we treat each other. One of the wonderful ministries of this church has been to bring history - with all its insights and inspiration - to the community. We do this best in our Fireside Chats and in our Graveyard Tours. These tours take a lot of work on the part of everybody. Have you signed up to be a tour guide yet? Please do so. If you're traveling, email me your interest! Be part of OUR ministry in helping others conform not to the world but the mind of Christ.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

Did you know?

...Why some people stand while others kneel at certain points in the service? Well, you know the old saying, "Stand to sing, kneel to pray, sit to listen." For the most part, that holds true in how we worship - although we stand to listen to the gospel, and we stand for the Creed.

But some people stand even when we pray. Why? There are two primary reasons. One is because in some congregations, standing is the preferred prayer position. In ancient times, most people prayed standing, with arms outstretched like the priest at communion. But kneeling came to be seen as more humble - looking down and away from God because we are not worthy rather than reaching toward God.

Another reason is physical comfort. For some, kneeling is painful. That's why even at the confession, we say "devoutly kneeling for all who are able." To the church, it does not matter whether you kneel or stand. Often, we have visitors from traditions of standing, and they stand through the entire Eucharistic prayer. Good for them! Maybe you might even want to give it a try.

No matter what reason one has for one's chosen prayer position, know that if it is sincere prayer, God is listening.

Announcements

WELCOME GLENN MAY!

This Sunday, we welcome our new Minister of Music, Glenn May. It's clear that Summer travel is still concern, and we will have opportunities to give Glenn a more formal welcome as time goes on, but this Sunday, it would be great to have as many St. James' folks as possible to usher in his first Sunday among us.

Sunday School Meeting Sunday

Just a reminder that we will meet this **Sunday, August the 27th** to discuss Sunday School for 2017-2018.

We will meet in the J2A room after the 10:00 service.

Agenda:

- classroom assignments
- Teachers/assistants/substitutes?
- curriculum
- calendar/open house-registration
- special events

Become a Graveyard Tour Sponsor:

Do you own a business or are you in a position to influence decisions at your company? If so, why not become a Graveyard Tour Sponsor? Several local businesses have done so already. What does it take to support the Tours, and what's in it for you? Glad you asked.

For as little as \$50, your business will be listed on the Graveyard Tour website all year. This site get a lot of traffic especially during the tour season. You also get your company listed on the tour programs. AND, depending on the amount of your support, your company receives at least one complimentary ticket for opening night (those who donate more than 350 receive three tickets for any night).

BUT the best part is that you will be helping your church reach and inspire the world with God's love. And that's a pretty good deal. See Fr. Chuck if you want to become a sponsor.

Choir Season Starts Soon

We are beginning a new season with a new minister of music. Why not make this your chance for trying a new thing. Join the choir! Rehearsals are once a week. Our new minister of music, Glenn May, would like to invite you to the first rehearsal of the season on **Thursday, August 31 at 7:30 PM**. See if you like it. Learn what you can do. Get in gear for wonderful, soulful, prayerful music. The first Sunday with choir anthem will be **September 7**. Come make beautiful music.

Reading Adventures News

Once again, Reading Adventures, our after-school reading program for children at North Park Elementary School, will help kids with improving reading. The reading program meets once a week after school. In it, volunteers read one-on-one with children who have been recommended as likely to benefit from a little extra reading. North Park has a new principal this year, Ms. Lynnette Williams who is enthusiastic and welcoming. She had committed to encouraging as much participation as possible and smoothing our way however she can.

For this first semester, we will meet on Thursdays, starting at the end of the school day and reading for one hour. The program year will begin on **Thursday, October 19**. If you would like to volunteer as a reader, please contact Fr. Chuck or Anna Marie Pitcher.



Dear Friend of Taconic,
We are sending you a reminder about a relevant and powerful retreat
coming soon to Taconic Retreat Center.

Agents of Peace in a Time of Fear

Facilitated by the Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF and the Rev. Garrett Mettler

September 15th & 16th



Discover Your Inner Peacemaker & Reconciler on this retreat designed to turn back our present tide of divisiveness, conflict and inflammatory speech. Participants will reconnect with the peacemaking example of Christ and be empowered with practical methods to become agents of peace and reconciliation in their own communities.

| August 2017 | | | | | | |
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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| 27 Glenn May's 1st Day at St. James' | 28 Office Closed | 29 | 30 10 AM Morning Prayer | 31 11 AM Bible Study | | |
| 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.diocesen.org/administration/for-clergy/liturgical-and-sacramental/diocesan-calendar-of-intercession/>

August

- 27 Chancellor and Vice-Chancellors of the Diocese
- 28 St. Augustine's Church, Manhattan
- 29 National Association for Episcopal Schools
- 30 St. Luke's Church, Eastchester
- 31 St. Mark's Church (Nepa Park), Yonkers

September

- 1 Diocesan Committee for Campus Ministry
- 2 St. Mark's Church, Chelsea

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.

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| Birthdays (this past week): | Liz Granados, Scott Pitcher, Jeffrey E. Pardee and Christopher Santos |
| Birthdays (this coming week): | Liz Van Wagner, Sharan Alessandra, Charles L. Pardee, Jr. and Michael Glancey |
| Acolytes: | August 27: Team 3 September 3: Team 1 |
| Altar Guild: | August 27: Team III September 3: Team III |
| 8 a.m. Readers: | August 27: Lucille Ogden and Grant Ferris September 3: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo |
| 10 a.m. Readers: | August 27: Wendy Urban-Mead and Charlotte DeGross September 3: Russell Urban-Mead and Joann Clark |
| Ushers: | August 27: Dean Caswell, Audrey Horne September 3: Bill and Regina Ardini |
| Pledge Clerks: | August 27: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell September 3: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright |
| Parish Cycle of Prayer: | August 27: Dyan Wapnick, Dave and Chris Wardell, Linda Way September 3: Pat Weber, Cliff and Bobbie Wells, Corey Whalen |
| Coffee Hour Hosts: | August 27: Summer Schedule--No Coffee Hour September 3: Summer Schedule--No Coffee Hour |

This Week's Lectionary

Exodus 1:8-2:10
Psalm 124
Romans 12:1-8
Matthew 16:13-20

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 304 - I Come With Joy To Meet My Lord
Sequence: 443 - From God, Christ's Deity Came Forth
Offertory: 680 - O God Our Help In Ages Past
Communion: 305 - Come Risen Lord And Deign To Be Our Guest
Recessional: 523 - Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (August 20, 2017)

"All Well That Ends Well?"

What a week it's been, huh? Just last Sunday, I was preaching to you about the Neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville, Virginia that ended so tragically in murder and countless fights.

Throughout the week, the tensions mounted with questions of what should be said about it and what constitutes free speech, and are Nazis really such bad guys anyway?

Then, yesterday, in Boston, the white supremacists were to have another rally in Boston. If the Boston Globe is to be believed, they counted about fifty white supremacists and roughly 40,000 counter-protesters - just to show what this country really thinks of them.

The bad guys - and it is fair to say from the pulpit that there is nothing good in Nazi or white supremacist ideology - were sent packing. So, that takes care of that, right? All's well that ends well, right?

Um... I think you know the answer to that.

If you don't, maybe our scriptures can help. Let's look at Joseph in Genesis. Remember from last week how his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt because they were afraid their positions of privilege were threatened by Joseph?

Well, after a series of events in which Joseph interpreted the Pharaoh's dreams, the Pharaoh promoted Joseph from slave to number 2 in the country. Which would be a nice ending to the story. And it gets better when famine drives Joseph's brothers down to Egypt to beg for assistance.

This is where Joseph chooses mercy and forgiveness over vengeance. Joseph's family moves down to be with him - and yes! - All's well that ends well! Except that we know what happens next. Joseph eventually dies, and his people end up in slavery for 400 years.

The Gospel tells a similar tale. Jesus, who has just taught his disciple that it's the words that come out of our mouth that defile us (not the food that goes in), next proves the point. When a Canaanite woman begs him to heal her daughter, he refuses, and in the process insults her. He says it would be wrong for him to throw the children's food to the dogs.

Nevertheless, she persisted, saying that even dogs get the scraps that fall from the table. And in an instantaneous change of attitude - a change so fast that in anyone else it *would* be a miracle - Jesus says "Great is your faith!" Then he heals her daughter. All's well that ends well!

Only, it doesn't.

Because even if Jesus and this foreign woman actually collaborated to prove Jesus' point about our words being what corrupt us - even if he called her a dog knowing she would shame him with her response - that has not stopped people from demeaning others by calling them names - and of course, much worse.

It has never stopped. In this country, the Civil War officially ended slavery, and we thought, well that's over! All's well that ends well. Until Jim Crow, and Segregation, and Sundowner laws and red lining and targeted mass incarceration and the rise - again - of the KKK.

World War II ended in absolute victory, until we discovered that there are Nazis who live among us to this day.

But that's okay. We had rallies across the country this week to condemn hatred and to support justice really, and we showed those Nazis and Klansmen that they don't have a chance - not in America. Yesterday should've been the knockout punch.

But of course, the fight is not over. It's never been over - and it never will be. There will always be those who want power over others, to dominate them, to squash them. Racial or religious minorities are easier, of course, but even in homogeneous cultures, cruelty always tries to take over.

It is a constant battle.

And here's the worst part. The main battle is not with *them*. It's within us. Because much of the time, the hurtful words and more hurtful actions come from us good folks who would *never* spew hatred.

Which may have been Jesus' point exactly. With regard to race in America, it's often the quiet stuff that does the most damage. For example, do you know what two of the most segregated cities in the country are? Boston and - you guessed it - New York.

How could that be? By quiet and systematic exclusion of different groups. Real estate agents direct clients of color to certain areas, police harass people of color more in some neighborhoods than others, banks don't give loans, polling stations are closed in neighborhoods where people of color live. Sometimes we call this gentrification. Just this week it was reported that the City of

Poughkeepsie is contemplating reducing service in a largely black neighborhood and increasing it in a white neighborhood that depends on the bus less. I don't know if that's really what's happening here, but it *is* something that has taken place across the country.

So yes, what comes out of us is often what defiles - even when we can't believe it.

Now, I don't know if this will encourage or discourage you, but this isn't just a racial thing; it's true in every aspect of life. When I was young naive, I asked a friend who attends AA meetings how much longer he would have to go. He gave me a funny look, so I said, "Well, you're not drinking anymore. When can you stop going? When are you healed?"

He said, "Never."

And I, in my foolishness, said, "Well what good is it if you're never better?"

The answer, of course, is that getting better, being healed, is a lifelong process. Whether as individuals in our souls or as a society, there is no such thing as having a permanent fix. We can only work to improve things.

This should never lead to despair or complacency. We don't give up simply because we can't make everything perfect. Because we *can* make things better. Even though relations between Jews and Canaanites continued to be tense, the woman whose daughter Jesus healed would forever be thankful - and those Jews who were present would see Canaanites just a little differently.

In the same way, we can't say, "Oh well. It'll always be this way - no point in trying." That is not the way of Jesus who asks us to constantly look within.

So no, all's *not* well that ends well because it never ends - not in this earth, anyway. But our struggle for God's love in this world will see its completion in the Kingdom of God. And then yes, all will be well. Amen.

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