

# St. James' E-pistle

## Date of Sunday Service: September 17, 2017

### Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

#### *Bible Verse*

*Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.*

*- Romans 14:2*

#### **Pulpit Notes**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

A colleague of my got flack from her parish recently because, like many congregations in the region of various denominations, she put up a rainbow flag to show that their congregation was welcoming of people who are lesbian or gay.

She said a parishioner fretted that they would be known as “the gay church.” This was, of course, not her - or the Vestry’s - intention because the church is no more a “gay church” than it is a “straight church.” The church is the church, and as our venerable signs purport, “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You.”

If that’s the case, you may ask, why did they feel it necessary to put up a flag and draw attention to themselves? The answer is simple. Quite often, people of a different sexual orientation have not been welcome in our churches, despite our signage. Many have been met with cold shoulders, verbal hostility, and even violence. In the church.

The rainbow flag is a way of saying, “You are safe here. We really do mean all people are welcome.” It may draw unwanted attention to the church - but it is attention for doing what Jesus did, which is to offer God’s love to all.

This isn’t all that different from criticisms people received for having “Black Lives Matter” signs. Again, critics said, “All Lives Matter; why should black lives matter more?” Perhaps those signs should read, “Black Lives Also Matter,” for that’s what they really mean. From the church’s perspective, what the sign and the flag mean is that God loves all God’s children equally, and even though we do not achieve this goal ourselves, it is our goal.

In the early days of the church, good Christians found other issues with which to marginalize people. Were they circumcised? Did they eat the right food? Did they fast? The apostle Paul rightly said that those who eat must not despise those who fast, and those who fast must not judge those who don’t.

Because one way is not better than the other when it comes of indifference. And frankly, most of the issues we grab onto so that we can marginalize, isolate, exploit or abuse others are not the big

issues Jesus spoke about. What he spoke about was whether we loved our neighbor as ourselves, whether we cared for those in prison or in poverty or otherwise despised by the powerful.

I haven't ever asked that we put up a rainbow flag or a Black Lives Matter sign. But that should never be taken to mean St. James' is not a place of welcome and invitation for every single person who walks through our doors seeking God. Because flag or not, all are at home in the sanctuary of Christ.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

### **A Message from the Diocese of New York's Disaster Response Coordinator**

**In Response to the Hurricanes that have devastated so much of our country, and in anticipation of more to come, here are a couple of things you can do:**

#### **Donate**

At this point so soon after landfall, the best thing to do is to make donations to help. Because of our history with them and their immediate help during hurricane Sandy, I recommend that donations be made to Episcopal Relief & Development, either online at <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-you-can-do/give/donate-now/individual-donation> or by sending your check to Episcopal Relief & Development, [P.O. Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058](mailto:PEP@episcopalrelief.org).

#### **Volunteer**

Although it is still very early in the Recovery process, if you are interested in going to one of the affected areas to help as a volunteer, please fill out their Ready to Serve form at <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-you-can-do/volunteer/ready-to-serve>. Please contact me if your congregation is considering sending a group of volunteers and I can help point you to the contact person at the local site.

Thank you for your willingness to help those in need and, of course, for your prayers.

## **Announcements**

### *Men's Breakfast*

Men of St. James', breakfast this month is Saturday, September 16 at 8:00 AM. As usual, we're meeting at Cranberry's. These are great times, so join us!

*Sunday School Starts!*

Sunday School starts **THIS SUNDAY!** For this week, it will start at the beginning of the service. If you haven't registered yet, **It's Never Too Late!**

*Women's Dinner:*

Women of St. James', dinner this month is **Monday, September 18 at 6:00 PM.** The meeting will be at Antonella's. So, come out and enjoy each other's company!

*Vestry Meeting:*

The Vestry meets next **Tuesday, September 19 at 7:00 PM.**

*Outreach Meeting:*

St James Church Outreach meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday each month [at 6:30 pm.](#) [This Wednesday, September 20](#) begins the fall meetings. We meet in the Wilkes Room. Are you looking to be involved? - Come join us!

*Youth Group:*

St. James' Youth (sometimes called "Episcopal-Pals") are making plans and going places. All middle and high school students are invited to join the group. Our first monthly activity is a challenge course (at Mariapolis Luminosa) on **Sunday, September 24 at 3:00.** We'll meet at the church and leave at 2:45 pm. Bring your friends!

*Oil Contract Offer:*

St. James has just entered into this year's heating oil contract. Rainbow Oil is offering all members of St. James a personal contract to lock in a price of \$2.099 per gallon [until March 31, 2018.](#)

If you are interested just call Rainbow Oil and request a contract be mailed to you, sign and return it.

Rainbow Oil's number is [229-9418.](#)

*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 gets 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.

*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.

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**2017 - 2018 SUNDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION FORM**

Child's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name Child Prefers to be called \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Entering \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Full Address \_\_\_\_\_

(If parents live apart, please give address at which the child lives most of the time and indicate which parent is at that address.)

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ May we send e-mail notices to you? Yes / No

Has your child attended St. James Sunday School before? Yes / No

Are you members of the church?      Yes / No      Has your child been baptized?      Yes / No

Will you be attending church while your child is in Sunday School?      Yes / No

If not, emergency contact info:

At what phone can we reach you in case of emergency? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional emergency contact name \_\_\_\_\_

phone number \_\_\_\_\_

relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any restrictions/conditions your child has, or is there any information the teacher should know in order to make Sunday School a more positive experience for your child? Yes / No

If yes, please explain.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, problems, suggestions you or your child might have regarding Sunday School.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# September 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
10 Sunday School Registration	<b>11</b> <b>Office Closed</b> Nursery School 6:30 PM 9/11 service	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 10 AM Morning Prayer	<b>14</b> 11 AM Bible Study	<b>15</b> <b>Harvest Dinner</b>	16 8 AM Men's Breakfast
17 Sunday School Starts	<b>18</b> <b>Office Closed</b>  6 PM Women's Group	<b>19</b> <b>7:00 PM Vestry</b>	<b>20</b> 10 AM Morning Prayer	<b>21</b> 11 AM Bible Study	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
24 3:00 PM Youth Group	<b>25</b> <b>Office Closed</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 10 AM Morning Prayer	<b>28</b> 11 AM Bible Study	<b>29</b>	30 Regional Council  7:00 PM Tour Dress Rehearse

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/>

- 17 St. Thomas' Church, Mamaroneck
- 18 RenewalWorks Program for Congregational Vitality
- 19 Trinity Church of Morrisania, Bronx
- 20 School Chaplains of the Diocese
- 21 Church of St. Matthew & St. Timothy, Manhattan
- 22 Episcopal Chaplaincy at Columbia University
- 23 St. John's Episcopal Church, Kingston

## 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.*

Birthdays  
(this past week): Laura Kinne, Pat Keeffe and Fred Champion

Birthdays  
(this coming week): Edith Kline, Thomas I. Finnigan, Kathy Graff, Stephen Gaulin and Laurel Ardini

Acolytes:  
September 17: Team 3  
September 24: Team 1

Altar Guild:	September 17: Team I September 24: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	September 17: Debbie Belding and Thomas Finnigan September 24: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	September 17: Patty Caswell and Nancy Montero September 24: Wendy Urban-Mead and Andy Hall
Ushers:	September 17: Nancy Montero, Anna Marie Pitcher September 24: Andrew and Tonya Hall
Pledge Clerks:	September 17: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher September 24: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	September 17: Brian, Joanna, Julianna and Matthew Zocchi, Eric and Tammy Zavadi and St. James' Church School September 24: Bill, Regina and Laurel Ardini, Vince Asher and Joe Baldwin and Beverly Briggs
Coffee Hour Hosts:	September 17: Deirdre Mae Micker, Wendy and Russell Urban-Mead September 24: Brian Rance, Saira Shahani

## **This Week's Lectionary**

Exodus 14:19-31  
Psalm 114  
Romans 14:1-12  
Matthew 18:21-35

## **This Week's Hymns**

Processional: 390 - Praise to the Lord  
Sequence: 516 - Come Down, O Love Divine  
Offertory: "Loving and Forgiving Are You, O Lord"  
Communion: 603 - When Christ Was Lifted  
Recessional: 411 - O Bless the Lord, My Soul

## **Last Week's Sermon**

Sermon Preached on Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost (September 10, 2017)

## *"Binding and Loosing"*

Here are some things that people have expressed anger to me about when the church says you should or should not do them: go to church every Sunday, not work on Sunday, not play "Here Comes the Bride" at weddings, get married in a church, not give a eulogy at a funeral, not discriminate based on someone's ethnic identity, gender, or sexual orientation, embrace all people as children of God regardless of where they come from or how they got here.

I'm sure you can think of a lot of other things you've gotten mad at me for, whether it's something I or the larger church said we should or should not do.

Sometimes, people get mad but say, "These are the rules of my church. I'll follow as closely as I can." Other people say, "I like church, but that's a stupid rule. I'll just ignore the rules I don't like." And other times, people say, "Nobody tells me what to do. I'm going to a different church."

For what it's worth, I really don't mind when people come to me and question what either I or the larger church are doing. That often leads to positive conversations. An example of that is my decision to try an experiment with the sermon, moving it to the end of the service. I've had quite a few conversations about that in the past week or so. Not everyone is thrilled, but when they have come to me - as Jesus says in today's Gospel - we've had fruitful discussions where I've at least been able to explain my reasons for the experiment. I don't have time to go into it now - not unless you want a really long sermon - but I'm not implementing it till week after next, so you've got time to talk if you want.

But you've always known that people get mad at church rules, decisions, and limitations. What does that have to do with the gospel? Well, it's the same church Jesus tells us to go to resolve entrenched disputes. It's the same church of which Jesus says, "whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Let's look at that phrase, binding and loosing, to get a handle on this whole idea of the church telling us what to do - or not do.

Binding and loosing essentially means to bind a specific current situation to a law in scripture, or to loose it, that is to deem that it is not bound by the law.

It's basically making a judgement. The law says do not steal, but is it stealing in THIS particular situation. For example, is it stealing if you find a \$20 bill on the ground and keep it? How about if you see someone drop it? If you see them drop it, you are bound not to take it. If you don't, you're loosed. This was an ancient system, and Jesus tells them to make judgements based on the law. In short, he gives them, the leaders, (but also all members of the Body) authority and command to be decision-makers, judges, and lawmakers.

But Jesus adds a twist. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Suddenly, we're not just talking about making decisions based on whether a situation fits the letter of the law. Jesus says binding here is binding in heaven, loosing here is losing in heaven. Much as when he says, if two of you agree on something you ask in earth, it'll be done by your Father in heaven.

The decisions we make, the requests, the rules... each of them is noticed by God. Each one reflects our relationship with God in Heaven.

Jesus regularly asks us to think beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of the law. For him, there is only one law: to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor as yourself. While we have to make decisions about how to act in thousands of ways every day, Jesus is essentially saying, we are called to bind our Action to that one law. Is it loving?

Being bound on earth alone is a small, technical thing. Being bound in heaven means applying the standard of eternally gracious, forgiving, unconditional love.

I know, this is vague and fuzzy. So, let's look at just one thing the church says you should do and see how it's bound both on earth and in heaven, both by letter and spirit. Let's look at the rule: you should go to church every Sunday.

On the surface, it's a rule. You obey it or you don't - I have no mechanism to force compliance even if I wanted to. Often people think this exists so we can guarantee attendance - gotta look good, after all - or a good plate offering. Or it's designed to control the sheep. But the spirit of this admonition is based almost entirely in relationship. Relationships thrive when people are present to each other. Our relationship with each other - the Body of Christ - works best when we make time for each other. Our relationship with God works best when we make intentional time with God and the Body Christ.

If we are to be in relationship, then this is important to its health.

When Jesus says what we bind on earth is bound in heaven, he's reminding the disciples and us that the law we are bound by is God's love. Does it comport with this law? If not, maybe it ought to be loosed. Amen.

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