

St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church,
Timonium, Maryland

Vol. XXIII, Number 2

Edited by Anne Hawkins

January 24th, 2012

FROM THE RECTOR

Drawbacks to living in the Land of Feely-feel

IN RECENT years, there has been a complete revolution in the way people make their minds up about things. In times past, when people were trying to decide whether a course of action was wise or foolish, or whether a concept was good or bad, they would gather as much information about it as possible and analyze it as best they could. Finally, when they had reviewed all the data, they'd reach their decision.

It was, admittedly, a time consuming process and one that required a good deal of work and some very hard thinking. This was not always congenial, but it was generally accepted that it was the price one had to pay if one was going to make any sort of serious decision – or, indeed, even if one was going to hold an opinion about anything in the least bit controversial.

In other words, anybody who used the words "I think . . ." had to be prepared to defend their ideas by demonstrating that they had thought about them seriously before expounding them.

What's more, it was also necessary to show some familiarity with other people's thinking on the subject – both pro and contrary – in order to make one's case. When the subject matter was in the least bit controversial it was usually necessary to cite "chapter and verse" in order to sustain one's case.

This expression "chapter and verse" is a metaphor for precision in the construction of an argument. To cite "chapter and verse" is a synonym for producing proof that's hard to refute. As things happen, it is also a tribute to the precision and intellectual rigor that the old fashioned theologians used to bring to their work.

They constructed their hypotheses with rigorous logic and consummate scholarship. They demonstrated the solidity of their cases by painstakingly citing scriptural proofs – chapter and verse – for every inference they drew; every assertion they made. To counter their arguments one had first to demolish their foundations – their footnotes.

The funny thing about this practice is that theologians used it for thousands of years. In fact, The Bible is crammed with examples of the practice of citing chapter and verse. Take St. Mark's account of Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan:

Before Mark gets into his account, he cites the prophets – setting the Baptist in his theological context. He demonstrates, in academic fashion, that Jesus is the long awaited "messenger" sent before the face of the Messiah foretold by Malachi and "the Voice of one crying in the wilderness" predicted by Isaiah.

To make clear to his readers that his understanding of the Baptist's role in heralding the Messiah accords with not only that of John, himself, but The Bible, Mark quotes two further scriptural passages (one from The Book of Genesis and one from Isaiah) both of which John, himself, cited in explaining who he was.

Mark did this in order to hammer home the point that he wasn't writing fables or fairytales or his own wild speculations; that, rather, he was writing the record of the precise fulfillment of God's specific prophecies.

The drawback to this method of doing things, of course, is that it's time consuming and very hard work. Thus, it's hardly surprising in this the age of labor saving devices, we have come up an easier way of doing this. Instead of thinking, we "feel."

People rarely say they "think" something anymore. They say they "feel" it. What's more, the remarkable thing is that by "feeling" we have discovered that many of things that back in "the bad old days" we used to "think" were wrong were actually right. We know they are right because they "feel" right.

We know, for instance, that God is love. Thus, it "feels" clear the purpose of Christ's Gospel is to make people "feel" good about themselves. We "feel" that no matter what we do, or how we behave, if it "feels" right, it's what God wants us to do. God made us in His image -- so let's celebrate the fact. God is love; *ipso facto* love is God.

St. Stephen's
Choir of Men & Boys
A CANDLEMAS
CHORAL EVENSONG
at 6.00 PM
at The Parish Church
Sunday, January 29th, 2012

"Feeling" rather than "thinking" (and the associated freight that goes with it: research, study, reading, writing, learned discussion) leaves an awful lot more time for the good things in life. But it can get us into serious trouble. Take this frequently quoted text from The First Epistle General of St. John: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Not so long ago, I heard a radio preacher cite it to substantiate his "feelings" about God's approach to sinners. He "felt" it means that, once we profess a belief in Jesus' existence, we are saved for all time. In other words, providing we believe God exists, we can die in the course of committing the most serious sort of serious sin and still be assured of a place in heaven. To buttress his argument, he cited another text, the latter part of John 12:47: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

This must have been quite a comfort to a listener whose brother – a "born again criminal" – had died in a shootout with police during the commission of a robbery. But folks with a passing acquaintanceship with the Bible ought to be able to recognize that there is something off base about this line of reasoning. Thus we would perhaps be wise to look up the text ourselves.

Verses 6 & 7 of the First Chapter of the First Epistle General of St. John actually read: "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Similarly, John 12:47 reads: "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and received not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken: the same shall judge him on the last day."

In other words, there are conditions attached to salvation. Yes, the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from our sins -- but only if we have made a good faith effort to try to avoid falling in to sin and if we are genuinely repentant when we do so. God isn't silly enough to imagine we can be perfect, but he does expect us to make some sort of stab in the right direction. If we fail to make that stab, He is likely to hold us accountable for our shortcomings.

The radio preacher's elementary error illustrates one of the drawbacks to relying on one's feelings. "Feelings" tend to reflect the world as we would like it to be, not as it really is. "Feelings" have little to do with experience. When we allow ourselves to "feel" rather than to "think" we lose our grasp on reality.

Jesus certainly does love us sinners, no matter how black our sins may be. But we would be most unwise to let our feelings fool us into ignoring what God tells us about himself in the book called The Bible. Unless we let reality into our lives, face up to the sins we have committed, show true repentance and try to amend our ways, the knowledge that Jesus loves us is a purely academic matter.

No matter what we "feel" about the subject – whether we like it or not – God makes the rules. Our duty is to accept God on his terms. He is not obliged to accept us on ours. **GPH***

**THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR
THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

Being Sunday, January 29th, 2012

8.00 AM & 9.15 AM

HOLY COMMUNION

The Epistle: Romans 13:1-7

The Gospel: St. Matthew 8:1-13

11.15 AM MORNING PRAYER

The Psalter: Psalm 66

The First Lesson: Isaiah 61:1-11

The Second Lesson: St. Luke 4:16-32

HOLY TRINITY SEMINARY

Two courses for Lent

HOLY TRINITY Seminary's new Associate in Theological Studies (AST) course "**How to read your Bible**" will meet Mondays from 7-15 PM to 9.15 PM at St. Stephen's Church beginning February 6th and ending March 26th. The course costs \$200 for students in the program and \$150 for auditors.

The course explores the fundamental principles on how to approach God's Word with the purpose of making all of its various kinds of literature intelligible and meaningful in our walk with the Lord. It will focus on methods of reading as well as offering plenty of opportunity to work through specific biblical texts.

The Ministry Masters course deals with the subject of "**Spirituality and Modernity.**" Classes will meet at Christ the King Church parish house from 9.00 AM to 2.00 PM on the following five Saturdays: January 21st, February 18th, March 17th, April 14th, and May 12th. The audit fee is \$150.

Students will examine various personalities who have struggled to maintain their spirituality in the face of the challenges of Modernism and Post-Modernism. The course begins with a general discussion of the Enlightenment and its world view, focussing on attitudes and ideas that have shaped Western culture. Discussion will center on three Christian thinkers: the Dane Soren Kirkegaard, the Russian Vladimir Soloviev, and the Polish Pope John Paul II.

✠ PARISH PRAYER LIST ✠

OUR Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List and guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the parish office at 410 560 6776.

RECOVERY: Riley, Sallie, Linda Lou, Cynthia, Goff, Robert, Nancy, Judith, Deborah, Dorothy, Dr. Devadadson, Thelma, Mary, Adele, Linda, Jan, Liz, Bob, Wyatt, Jim, Reta, Sara, Tammy Sophie, Paula, Blair, Melvin, Noah, Mavis, Heather, Laurie, Diane, Don, Lynn, Helen, Katherine, Hindra, Ravi, Elizabeth, Brian, Tracey, Robert, Nancy, Edithann, Jay, Perry, Amelia, Shirley, Adrian, Kimberly, Dean, Barb, Tanya, Jane, Brook, Val, Joseph, Joshua, Rachel, Carl, Cal, Catherine, Sam, Ruth, Kristi, Paul, Sue, Patty, Antonio, Ray, Lauren-Michelle, McKayla, Randy, Jack, Grace, Fran, Carolyn, Ken, Serina, Wyatt, Bobby, Alexander, Erline, Kathleen, Earle, Judy, William, Betty, Trisha, Peggy, Linda, Millie, Walt, Bruce, Cienna, Tom, Leliliah, Jennifer, Miriam, Karen, George, Eliza, Mel, John, Randy, James, Sarah, Linda, Suzanne, Steven, Jeanne, Tammy; Ellen, Patricia, Bonnie, Mary Ann, Christine, Dee, Brian, Barbara, Gillian, Eileen, Matthew, Bryan, Jason, Joan, Frances, Pat, Michael, Brandon, May, Scott, Stephen, Robert, Danny, Billy, Betty-Ann, Mildred, D'Metrius, Laura, Stacey, Frank, Alma, Christine, John, Henry, Naomi, Pam, Ben, Kevin, Gwen, Gloria, Lee Emily, Bruce, Regina, Lewis, Madolin, Linda, Carol, Bernie, Charlene, Josephine, Margaret, Jody, Sheila, Jo Anne, John, Geradine, Thomas, Jeanne, Sister Catherine-Grace, Maxine, Ann Sharon, Dennis, Mae, Anita, Marilyn, Lawrence, Dorothy, Joanne, ✠Albion, Martha, Jackie, Charles, Tony, Edward, Kim, Vivian, Doris, Carol, Suzie and Jennifer.

LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Jennifer, Brendan, Rosa, June, Anna, Jean, Garrett, Ned, Stephen, Rachel, Robert & Renee, Lydia; Richard, Melba, Debbie, Phyllis, Carolyn, Suzanne, Tony, Erik, Drake, Bobby, Kay & Emma, Gillian, Beverley, Adrienn, Jhana, Marla, Matthew, Joan, David, Laurie, Ellen, Lynn, Mildred, Sarah Lee, Tom, Susan, Kathy, Owen, Douglas, Amy, Jo Anne, Mary, Gregory, Isabel, Bobby, Dorothy, Darren, Scott, Rebecca, William, Charles, Joyce, Asfa, Eleanor, Kathy, Linda, James, Barry, Ann, Evelyn, Jeanette, Elizabeth, Virginia, Mildred, Chris, Stephen, Carol, Sandra, John, Mary, Michael and David

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: LTC R.J. Lytle, PFC Charles E. Heintz, IV, USA; Lt. Benjamin Schramm, USMC; Lt. Alex Bursi, Charles Watts, USN; Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt. Col. Harry Hughes, USAF.

✠ St Stephen's Anglican Church ✠

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Web Address: ststeve.com

RECTOR: The Venerable Guy P. Hawtin

VICAR: The Rev. Rhae E. Kelley

ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER: Adric

DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)

WEDDING CO-ORDINATOR: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)

SUNDAY SERVICES

8.00am: Said Eucharist

9.15am: Sung Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)

11.15am: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Choral Eucharist)

6.00pm: Choral Evensong (1st Sunday only)

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6.00pm: Evening Prayer

Friday Noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5.00 pm: Family Eucharist.

**COLLECTS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY
AFTER EPIPHANY & THE RAVENS**

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *AMEN*
(Book of Common Prayer, Page 112)

Be mindful of thy servants the Ravens, O Lord, and watch over their endeavors on the field; grant them to fight the good fight with courage and strength in adversity, and grace in victory; that their good example and their success may bring credit to our city, and earn them the approbation of all; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *AMEN*
(Peter Threadgill, Resident Composer & Liturgist)

Return Service Requested

St. Stephen's Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
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