

St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church
Timonium, Maryland

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Edited by Don Ruthig

December 17th, 2013

FROM THE RECTOR

Getting it right the second time around

JOHN the Baptist didn't write a book — not even a slim one. Indeed, he left no written record of his life and ministry. All we know of him, we know from others. And among the most striking things they tell us about this messenger sent by God to prepare the way of the Messiah is that he didn't recognize Jesus for who he was until God personally announced it at the time John baptized him.

His failure to recognize the person whose arrival he was supposed to announce is all the more surprising because, as a babe in the womb, he recognized without the slightest difficulty, the unborn messiah when the pregnant Virgin Mary came to visit his mother, Elizabeth. No less surprising: Even after hearing God hail Jesus as the Messiah in his own voice, John still entertained doubts about him — so much so he sent two of his followers to check him out.

The episode says as much about human nature as it does about John. Not least, we have to accept that we have a natural predisposition to disbelief when God declines to act according to our preconceived notions of how he ought to do things. John the Baptist expected the Messiah to be a soldier, but God gave us a teacher.

This is a lesson we should take to heart when we consider the matter of the Second Coming. If a vast majority of human witnesses got things wrong the first time, are we really any more likely to get things right a second time around? After all many things remain constant in the Holy Land — not least the population and how the various racial and religious groups interact with one another. Today the country has the same ethnic mix as it had in the 1st Century AD. And people there are up to exactly the same sort of mischief they were engaged in 2,000 years ago.

In the 1st Century AD, terrorists were trying to drive the Roman military out of the Golan Heights, where troops were performing the same thankless peacekeeping task the U.S. Army is often called to undertake. A slick young political operative named Publius Sulpicius Quirinius had been appointed military governor of Syria, of which Judea was temporarily part - and his orders were to pacify the region.

Quirinius - the "Cyrenius" of St. Luke's Gospel - put a lid on things thanks to fast political footwork and a touch of brutality. He was the guy who figured out how to conduct a census of the Jewish population without breaking Jewish religious laws..

At the time Jesus began his earthly ministry, the terrorists had made the major highways so dangerous travelers could only venture on them in heavily armed military convoys. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho - a stomping ground of bandits for more than 1,000 years - was so fraught with peril that for centuries it had been known as 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death.'

The terrorists - collectively labeled Zealots - belonged to a variety of groups, with different names, but similar agendas. At least two of Jesus' disciples were terrorists or former terrorists: Simon Zealotes or Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot.

Diplomacy and constant vigilance were needed to maintain a fragile calm among the country's religious and ethnic groups — most of which were engaged in pursuing directly competing agendas. The threat of riots and civil unrest was ever present. It was fear of provoking a riot that convinced Pilate to permit Jesus' execution.

Absent our technology, the Holy Land of 2,000 years ago suffered from the same political and social ills manifest there today. The problems were so intractable the Jewish population longed for the messiah to be a warrior king like the great David and usher in a Golden Age of peace, prosperity and national supremacy.

People, thus, projected their own heartfelt longings on God's promise of salvation, picturing the Messiah as a warrior king of old. It was as if we in the 21st Century were expecting King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table to charge in on horseback and solve the world's problems by lopping off heads and cracking a few skulls. Tragically, the Jews in 1st Century Judea were so blinded by their romantic preconceptions they failed to recognize the Messiah when he actually arrived.

We would be foolish to imagine ourselves immune to similar romantic illusions. Back in 1999, a member a fundamentalist church, for example, told me the Second Coming was going to take place in the year 2000 and that he was greatly looking forward to being

"raptured." What particularly enthralled him was the prospect of being given a white horse and sitting on a mountaintop next to Jesus watching the Battle of Armageddon in the valley below. He rejected any suggestion that the white horse, the mountaintop and Armageddon might be metaphorical or allegorical. He was completely and utterly convinced that the prophecies of St. John's Revelation would be fulfilled quite literally.

I am not trying to make fun of his beliefs or claim that the Battle of Armageddon will not take place exactly as St. John foretells. But I would not bet the farm on it either. If the prophecy is to be taken literally, if there is to be a physical battle on the Plain of Megiddo (as opposed to a spiritual battle) it seems reasonable to think it will be fought with tanks and missiles rather than saber-wielding cavalymen. Truth to tell, the only things certain about the Second Coming are those

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR Schedule, Dec. 24th, 2013 to Jan. 12th, 2014

CHRISTMAS EVE

Tuesday, December 24th

4.00 PM: Children's Christmas Service
& Blessing of the Creche

7.00 PM: Family Candlelight Eucharist

10.30 PM: Choir sings carols followed by
Solemn High Christmas Eucharist

CHRISTMAS DAY

Wednesday, December 25th

10.00 AM Sung Holy Communion

PATRONAL FESTIVAL

The Feast of St. Stephen

Comm. Sunday, December 29th

8.00 AM: Holy Communion

9.15 AM: Choral Eucharist

11.15 AM: Choral Mattins

NEW YEAR'S EVE

The Feast of St. Sylvester

Tuesday, December 31st, 2013

11.15 PM

EPIPHANY

Sunday, January 12th, 2014

At 6.00 PM The Choir will sing

A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS FOR
EPIPHANY

Christmas Memorial Flowers

To make a contribution towards the Church Christmas decorations in honor or memory of a loved one please complete this form and return it with a check (payable to St. Stephen's Church and marked for Christmas flowers) by December 22nd.

Name of Donor: _____

Poinsettias (Red, White or Pink) 6 inches, single (5-8 blooms @ \$10 (# of plants.....))

7 inches, double, (10-12 blooms) @ \$16 (# of plants.....)

8 inches, triple, (Red) (12-18 blooms) @ \$27 (# of plants.....)

Total # of plants _____ Total amount enclosed _____

My gift is IN HONOR, IN MEMORY OF, IN THANKSGIVING FOR (please circle)

**THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE
THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

December 22nd, 2013

8.00 AM & 9.15 AM HOLY COMMUNION

For the Epistle: Philippians 4:4-7

The Gospel: St. John 1:19-28

11.15 AM CHORAL MATTINS

The Psalter: 80

The First Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11

The Second Lesson: St. John 1:19-28

that Jesus, himself, has told us: The event will take us all by surprise and, unlike the first time, there will be no mistake about who has arrived and what he is about to do. **GUY HAWTIN**✠

FROM PRISCILLA AND DICK HUFFMAN

Cookie Walk Wows 'Em

The St. Stephen's team has done it again - managed another Cookie Walk that seems to get better every year. Under Colby Hawks' coordination, with help from many others, we had a beautifully decorated hall with plenty of cookies. All the products sold well and we had many bids on the silent auction items. Our Santa Claus was popular again, and there were plenty of gifts at the children's tables. With an abundance of donated greens this year, we were able to make 30 wreaths, 30 centerpieces and many swags, all of which sold well. We received a number of compliments from visitors and hope that we have encouraged them to return to worship with us.

After a week of hard work and preparation, volunteers today were as cheerful as ever, enjoying being part of our successful event. Special thanks go to all those who baked, cooked, and prepared items for sale. As we enjoyed the wonderful Christmas atmosphere, our thoughts were also of Fr. Guy with wishes he could have shared the abundant day.

Thank you again to everyone who helped make our Cookie Walk this year such a success.

✠ PARISH PRAYER LIST ✠

OUR Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List as well as the guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice & Dr. Bob's Place. 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: Fr Guy Donna, Aida, Eunice, Cherry, Ruth, Carolyn, Hilarie, Vivian, Jack, Suzie, Pat, Mary John, Charlene, Bill, Rodney, Hamilton, Jane, Donald, Annie, Carolyn, Cynthia, Evelyn, Edith, Dee, Cal, Finton, Fran, Tracey, Linda Lou, Edie, John, Beth, Adele, Melba, Lydia, Chandra, Brady, Nina, Stacy, Dee, Val, baby Charlie and Maryann.

LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Connie, Azalea, Stephen, Ann, Paige, Lydia, Remi, Melba

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt. Benjamin Schramm, USMC; Lt. Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN. Lt. Col. Harry Hughes, Ian Cadwalader serving in Afghanistan.

Calendar of Events

Weekly Activities at St Stephens

Tuesdays, 7.00 AM: Breakfast Fellowship at the Nautilus Diner

Thursdays, 10.00 AM: Knitting Circle meets in Quimby Hall

Wednesdays, 6.30 PM: Bridge Group meets in Quimby Hall

Fridays, 10.30 AM: Bible Study in the Cadwalader Room

Special Events

Wednesday, December 18th, 12.00 Noon. The Ladies Who Lunch at Bluestone Restaurant.

Wednesday, December 18th, 7.00 pm. The Vestry meets in the Cadwalader Room

Monday, December 23rd, 9.00 AM: Volunteers needed to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas.

COLLECT FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT AND ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

O LORD Jesus Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end.

AMEN

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who, for the greater confirmation of the faith, didst suffer thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in thy Son's resurrection; Grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in thy sight may never be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore.

AMEN

Book of Common Prayer Pages 93 and 228

✠ St Stephen's Anglican Church ✠

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093
Tel.: Office (410) 560-6776; Rectory (410) 665-1278
Web Address: ststeve.com

RECTOR: The Rev. Canon Guy P. Hawtin

VICAR: The Venerable Michael Kerouac

ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER: Adric

DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE: Happy Riley
(410-252-8674)

WEDDING CO-ORDINATORS: Happy Riley (410-252-8674)
Martha Miller (410-321-9038)

SUNDAY SERVICES

8.00 am: Said Eucharist

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

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

6.00 pm: Choral Evensong (*1st Sunday only*)

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6.00 pm: Evening Prayer

Friday Noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5.00 pm: Family Eucharist.

Return Service Requested

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