

St Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church · Timonium, Maryland

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

June 7th, 2017

FROM THE RECTOR

Miracles illustrate our place in God's scheme

Many folks who consider themselves Christians profess to see little value in studying the Old Testament. "It's just a collection of bloodthirsty, primitive legends," a "progressive" friend once explained to me.

The same chap dismissed the miracles described in the scriptures for much the same reason. "I don't need miracles to persuade me to believe in God," he said.

The latter assertion is quite true, of course. Miracles aren't essential to convince thinking people of the existence of God. They do, however, provide a very useful reminder of the human race's place in the great scheme of things.

Not least, they demonstrate the vastness of God's power in comparison with our own.

Similarly, there is no substitute for the Old Testament when it comes to explaining our relationship with God. It is, for example, impossible to understand the need for Jesus' great redeeming act without the Old Testament.

Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, is known by the Jewish people as the Torah or the Books of the Law, and by Christian scholars as the Pentateuch.

It describes the beginning of man and the universe (the Creation), the beginning of sin (Original Sin), the beginning of the process of restoration of God's creation, and the beginning of the Hebrew nation the means by which this restoration was to come.

Exodus, the second book, describes the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. It shows the development of Israel into a real nation, as God began the first stages of fulfillment of His promise to Abraham contained in Genesis 12:2-3.

Beginning in Genesis – and continuing through Exodus and the other books of the Old Testament – we can see God actively intervening in human affairs to perform his work of redeeming mankind from the consequences of the fall from grace described in the third chapter of Genesis.

Mankind's need of salvation and the nature of the means by which it was brought about are evident in the differences between miracles that are recorded in the Old Testament and those performed by Jesus.

Take, for example, the following five Old Testament miracles. The parting of the Red Sea (*Exodus 14:21-31*). Stopping up the waters of the River Jordan (*Joshua 3:14-17*) The fall of Jericho (*Joshua 6:6-25*) Gideon's defeat of the Midianites (*Judges 7*) The destruction of the Assyrians (*II Kings 19:35*)

They all bear witness not simply to God's direct intervention in human affairs, but of the power of God as the ultimate source of such events.

Four of the miracles can be explained by what we somewhat casually refer to as the laws of nature. In short, they are not contrary to the laws of nature, rather they co-opt nature for supernatural purposes.

Meteorologists, for example, have discovered that the Red Sea divides in the manner recorded in Exodus when the wind blows in the way described in the book.

Similarly, the stopping up of the River Jordan and the collapse of the walls of Jericho came about thanks to the fortuitous occurrence of earthquakes. The Assyrian army camped before Jerusalem was wiped out by another natural event – a sudden deadly epidemic.

The miraculous element of these four events lies in the timing. At God's direction these natural events took place at precisely the right moment.

In the case of Gideon's defeat of the Midianites, the miracle lay in God's ability to instill such courage and discipline in the hearts of a small number of determined men enabling them to overcome a vast, but disorganized host.

It is fashionable these days to treat all miracles with skepticism. But if God created us and the universe, it seems unreasonable to suppose he would be unable to part the waters of the Red Sea, organize a couple of earthquakes at Jericho and arrange for an epidemic to strike an army camped in insanitary field conditions anytime he felt like it.

Jesus' miracles, by contrast, are of a wholly different order. A vast majority of his miracles of feeding and of healing, for example – are acts of creation. They are, in microcosm of course, no different from the creation of the universe.

But what else should we expect of the person described by St John as the *Logos*, the Word made Flesh? According to John, Jesus created the Universe and all that therein merely by uttering a word. And if he can create on such a scale, surely recreating malformed limbs, ears and eyes would be a piece of cake.

Folks who question the miracles recorded in the Bible seem to be operating on the entirely unwarranted assumption that God is confined by the laws he devised for us, his creatures. This is not merely illogical

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. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, ring the parish office on 410 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Timothy, Peter, June, Hilarie, Sarah, Betsy, Edie, Alan, Terry, Helen, Jim, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Aida, Stephen, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Eunice, Tom, Robert✘, David, Jan, Susie, Sophia, Bobby, Lee, Cary, Cour Marie, Joanna, Kendall, Ian, Gloria, June, John, David, Adrian, Michell, Aida, Mai, Al, Kathy & Don

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Melba, Sam, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Cindy, Jacob, Casey, Beth, Erin and Aubery

FOR THE DEPARTED: James Lee

FOR THOSE WHO MOURN: Marika Frank & Family

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN; Lt Col. Harry Hughes; MSGT Michael Holter, USAF; Cpt Fiodor Strikovski, US Army

it is highly presumptuous.

Rather than inviting skepticism, God's miracles should evoke in us feelings of awe, humility and gratitude – gratitude that, just as God took the trouble to lead the Israelites out of bondage to the Promised Land, he is no less actively concerned about us, his latter day Israelites. GPH✘

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School starts

on June 19th: Register now !

The Sunday School is calling for every child in the neighborhood to put on "The Armor of God" this summer at St Stephen's Vacation Bible School. It starts on June 19th and runs to June 23rd. Every "new squire" will learn the Shield of Faith, the Shoes of Readiness, the Helmet of Salvation the Breastplate of Righteousness, the Belt

of Truth and the Sword of the Spirit!!! VBS runs from 9:00AM-12:00PM-Monday thru Friday. Snacks will be provided. There will be crafts, water play, and games. The cost is \$20 per child. Please call the church office to register or see one of the Sunday school teachers. Hope to see your child at this faith-filled adventure!!!! DIANE NOVICKI
MORE FROM THE RECTOR

Stay put, O persons of God

Tragedy, they say, usually repeats itself as farce – an observation that might well be made about the political correctness that permeates our mainline churches.

After all, the vision of well-fed, pompous prelates doing the sort of things required by cutting edge liturgists – liturgical dance immediately springs to mind – is really quite shriekingly funny.

And it is by no means solely the liturgy that is affected. Church music has also fallen foul of the language police.

Hymns, for instance, are no longer called hymns in our more fashionable churches. These days they are known as “Songs of Praise.”

A friend of mine was once naïve enough to ask why. “Hymn is a sexist word,” he was told. “But,” protested my friend, “the word hymn is derived from the Greek for song. It has nothing to do with the battle of the sexes.”

“That doesn’t matter. It sounds sexist,” was the reply. If that strikes you as weird, think of the great old hymns that have been thrown out for no less bizarre reasons: “Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!” is out because it discriminates against paraplegics. “O for a thousand tongues to sing,” is out because it discriminates against folks who can’t speak. “Onward

Christian soldiers,” is out because it is militaristic. “Soldiers of Christ, arise,” is out on grounds of both militarism and discrimination.

The indignities inflicted on time-hallowed hymns are by no means restricted to outright proscription. Language is frequently bowdlerized to eliminate masculine nouns and pronouns. How about “Faith of our parents” or “Stay put, O persons of God”?

Back in the 1990s, when it was still possible to giggle smugly about such philistinism, a friend and I worked spasmodically on a parody that we dubbed “The Monosyllabic Liturgy.” It was, I guess, quite sophomoric, but it was fun while it lasted.

We experimented with new responses to the Salutation “The Lord be with you” and replaced “And also with you” with “Likewise, I’m sure.” We also toyed with new salutations such as “Get with it,” the response to which was “Right on!” As this rapidly fell out of linguistic fashion, we had to replace it with “Stay cool, dudes”, the response to which was “Awe- some.”

We got our comeuppance, however, when my friend was visited by an acquaintance from seminary, at the time a fast rising star in the Episcopal Church.

His visitor casually picked up “The Monosyllabic Liturgy” my friend had left lying around in his study. After flipping through the pages, he remarked: “You know this very interesting. We really ought to try it. Could you let me have a copy?”

My friend muttered something about it not being finished yet and, after his visitor had departed, telephoned me in a state of panic: “We’re going to have to get rid of it,” he told me, “I’m going to burn it. We’re just going to have to accept the fact that some things are utterly beyond parody.” **GPH**

St Stephen’s Anglican Church

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www.ststeve.com

The Rev. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*
The Venerable Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*
The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki and
The Rev. Robert Ludwig, *Associate Rectors*
The Rev. M Wiley Hawks, *Pastoral Care Chaplain*
Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist

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

11am: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)

6pm: Choral Evensong (as announced) –

evensong.ststeve.com

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6pm: Evening Prayer

Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5pm: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Monday, 6.30pm: Bridge Club

Tuesday, 7am: Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)

Thursday, 10am: Knitting Circle

Friday, 10.30am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Parish Youth Play Group

Saturday, June 10th, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm

Ladies Service Award

Recognition Tea

Sunday, June 11th, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm

The Ladies Who Lunch

Wednesday, June 21st, 12.00 pm - 2.00 pm

Peppermill Restaurant

call Joyce Perlberg to reserve a place 410-252-2680

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