

St Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church · Timonium, Maryland

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FROM THE RECTOR

Figuring out a sure-fire way to get to heaven

We are now in Advent -- the church season in which we look forward not to Christmas, the time of Jesus' First Coming but to his Second Coming when he will arrive "in power and great majesty to judge both the quick and the dead."

It's a frightening prospect, which explains our fascination with figuring out a sure fire way of getting into heaven. It was a question as popular at Jesus' time as it is today.

It was, for example, a question that arose when a wealthy, and deeply religiously minded, young man asked Jesus what he needed to do to have eternal life. Jesus told him: "If you want to enter into heaven, keep the commandments."

The young man wasn't very satisfied with his response. Levitical law embraced some 613 commandments and even the most observant Jews were aware it was an impossibility to observe all of them. Thus the young man's follow up question: "Which ones are absolutely vital for me to keep?"

Jesus replied: "Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honor thy father and thy mother. And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The young guy was outraged. This wasn't mere Judaism 101. It was kindergarten Judaism.

Of course, he wasn't going to kill anybody, or cheat on his wife or steal, or bear false witness. He was most certainly not going to treat his parents with anything other than honor. And as for loving his neighbors, like all observant Jews, he gave generously to charity.

"But I've done all these thing since I was a little kid," he exclaimed. "What else do I need to do?" "Ah ha!" said Jesus, "So you want to be perfect. In that case, sell all that you've got, give the money to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me."

This is not at all what the rich young man wanted to hear. It was not that he was tight fisted, but he enjoyed the luxury and power that went with his enormous wealth and the last thing he wanted to do was give it all up.

As the young man went unhappily away, Jesus turned to his disciples and remarked: "Truly I say to you that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you: It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

These days most people tend to assume this is bad news for folks with a few shekels in the bank. But in fact, it's bad news for absolutely everybody. St. Matthew points this out when he reports the disciples were utterly amazed by Jesus' statement and asked him: "If the rich can't be saved, who can be?"

No doubt their attitude comes as something of a surprise to people weaned on the notion that Jesus considered the poor especially blessed. Indeed, the Beatitudes are often quoted to back up such an assertion: "Blessed are the poor."

Actually Jesus, said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." A clunkier but perhaps more understandable translation of his saying would be: "Blessed are those who cultivate the virtue of humility." Poverty and humility are by no means synonymous -- far from it.

Jesus' disciples -- like all devout Jews of their day -- believed rich people stood the best chance of getting into heaven. Their money enabled them to be free to practice their faith without a need to make the compromises ordinary working stiff's were

forced to make just to get by.

Rich people, for instance, could observe the dietary laws even in times of famine. They didn't have to wiggle around the law forbidding work on the Sabbath. They also had the wherewithal to practice the sort of charity the Law of Moses demanded.

However Jesus' point is that nobody, rich or poor, pious or impious, can make it to heaven by his own efforts. The wealthy young man wanted to be perfect. But, as Jesus so graphically demonstrated to him, none of us can hope to achieve the level of perfection that's necessary to stand in the presence of God.

This explains the disciples' desperate question: "Who, then, can be saved?"

"With men this is impossible," said Jesus, "But with God all things are possible."

He then went on to explain that those of us that follow him will, indeed, have everlasting life. However, he added a warning that folks who think of themselves as top dogs here on earth won't necessarily be top dogs in heaven. Many that are first shall be last," he said, "And the last shall be first."

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows us just how

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR SCHEDULE

Dec. 24th, 2017 to Jan. 1st, 2018

CHRISTMAS EVE Sunday, December 24th

10.00 AM Eucharist

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 Monday, December 25th

10.00 AM Sung Holy Communion

PATRONAL FESTIVAL

The Feast of St. Stephen Comm. Sunday, December 31st

8.00 AM: Holy Communion

9.15 AM: Choral Eucharist

11.15 AM: Choral Mattins

NEW YEAR'S EVE The Feast of St. Sylvester

Sunday, December 31st, 2017 11.15

immeasurably superior God's standards are to what we humans think of as high standards. Jesus tells us that it is not how much we do, but the depth of our repentance that counts.

No matter at what point in our lives we begin our journey in Christ all of us, without exception, will get the same reward. Indeed, the career of St. Paul the Apostle is a perfect illustration of this. St. Paul, a devout and well-educated Jewish scholar, had never met Jesus during his earthly ministry.

He encountered Jesus, out of time as he puts it, when our Lord appeared to him as he was on his way to Damascus on a mission to persecute the Christian community in the city. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Jesus asked. In a matter of days, Saul the persecutor had become Paul, the last called of the Apostles.

Within a decade, Paul had planted churches all over the gentile world. Within 15 years, the Gospel had reached out beyond the fringes of the Empire. Paul self-described as "the least of the apostles" -- had become the greatest apostle of them all. GPH✠

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 410 560 677

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

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

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.

St Stephen’s Anglican Church

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Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Rev. Canon Guy P Hawtin, Rector
The Venerable Michael Kerouac, Vicar
The Rev. Michael Belt and The Rev. John Novicki
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: Sung 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

Cookie Walk 2016

Saturday, December 3rd, 9.00 am - 1.00 pm

Evensong

Sunday, December 4th, 6.00 pm

Parish Life

Tuesday December 13th, 7.00 pm

Ladies Who Lunch

(Bluestone Restaurant)

Wednesday December 21st 12.00 pm - 2.00 pm

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 Friday December 22nd.

Name of Donor: _____

Poinsettias (Red, White or Pink) 6 inches, single (3-5 blooms @ \$10 (# of plants.....)

6 inches, single, (6-8 blooms) @ \$16 (# of plants.....)

7 inches, double, (9-12 blooms) @ \$20 (# of plants.....)

Total # of plants _____ Total amount enclosed _____

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

St Stephen’s Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
Timonium, MD 21093

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