

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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FROM THE RECTOR

Services on the Internet

This is the first time in the best part of 370 years that Anglican Churches in the English speaking world have been closed by order of the government. Back then they were closed at the whim of Oliver Cromwell. Today, by start contrast, they are shuttered to inhibit the spread of a deadly disease.

The parochial clergy, however, are doing their best to care for the spiritual welfare of our parishioners, friends and neighbors near and far. Remember each of us is available on the telephone for folks in need of comfort, counsel or simply a chat. We can also stay in contact with each other through the weekly newsletter.

We had also been video recording Sunday Eucharists to enable you to maintain your Sunday worship. They may be a poor substitute from sharing the celebration person, but we hope that it will offer you some solace.

The Eucharists will be broadcast on the internet and a link to the services will be posted on the parish website (www.ststeve.com) at 9.00 AM ever Sunday morning as long as the emergency lasts. They will remain available all week. You will find them at the bottom of the Home Page, under "Recent Blog Posts."

Meanwhile here is a prayer for God's aid in this time of trouble. GPH✠

In Time of Peril

O ALMIGHTY God, the supreme Governor of all things, whose power no creature is able to resist, Save and deliver us, we humbly beseech thee, from the great sickness that afflicts not only our countrymen, but all the peoples of the earth; that we, being armed with thy defense, may be preserved evermore from all perils, to glorify thee, who art the giver of all succor; through the merits of thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A SERMON FOR PASSION SUNDAY

Don't be sure you will do better than the Pharisees

Today's Gospel is usually interpreted as an instance of arrogant, know-all Pharisees contemptuously rejecting the teachings of the Son of God. There is some truth in this. A majority of the folks listening to Jesus were highly skeptical about what he had to say. Indeed, many of them seem to have regarded his statements as the ravings of a mad man.

But before we treat these Pharisees with the same contempt that they treated Jesus, we ought to try to put ourselves in their shoes – an exercise that really shouldn't be particularly difficult. They were looking forward to the first coming of the Messiah, while we are looking forward to his second. And, surprisingly, the preconceptions of many Christians today with regard to the Second Coming are remarkably similar the preconceptions to those of the Jews of the First Century AD.

For starters, the Jews of the First Century expected the arrival of the Messiah to herald major changes in the established earthly social order. Similarly, many of today's Christians also expect the Second Coming, initially at least, to involve major earthly social changes.

Not every Christian expects quite the same thing, of course. For example, by no means every Christian believes in an instantaneous "rapture" that will leave cars empty and saucepans boiling over untended on the stove. But nor were all First Century Jewish expectations alike.

However, one thing that all Christians have in common is they expect the Messiah of the Second Coming to be instantly recognizable. In precisely the same way, Jews of the First Century expected the Messiah of the First Coming to be instantly recognizable. And the reason they did so is, just like us, their prophetic scriptures told them how to recognize him.

The Old Testament contains close on 350 direct prophecies and some 700 or so indirect prophecies about him. They described who he would be, where he would be born, what he would do, how he would die and how he would rise from the dead. Jesus fulfilled them all – and yet, initially at least, large numbers of decent God-fearing folk failed to recognize him for whom he really is.

The reason for this, of course, is they had preconceived notions about what sort of person he would be and how he would conduct himself. They expected him to be a human being – a cross between a king and a prophet. They believed he would be instantly recognizable as a worthy

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 visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the parish office (410) 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Eileen, Rebecca, Catherine, Richard✠,

Janis, Parisa, Daniel, Leona, Rachel, Elizabeth, Kim, Dorothy, Donna, Skip, Dan, Sarah, Betsy, Edie, Heidi, Alan, Terry, Helen, Linda, John, Neal, Stephen, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Jan, Bobby, Lee, Cary, Marie, Jim, Joanna, Kendall, Ian, Gloria, June, John Tom, Michell, Jack, Lewey, Stephen, Pamela, David, Wade, Sifa, Eileen, Ravi, Theresa, Lisa, Larry Ricard, Judy & Scott

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Cameron, Caroline, Karen, Ardis, Mavis, Michael, Melba, Sam, Vinnie, Doug, Chip, Elizabeth, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Jacob, Casey, Beth, Kath, Rebecca, Colin & Christian.

IN MEMORIAM: Mrs Frances Fox

THOSE WHO MOURN: Fran Burns and family.

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

successor of the great King David and a mighty warrior to boot.

They had clear-cut views about the nature of the salvation he was bringing. They expected the Messiah to share their moral values and to be outraged by the behavior of the non-observant Jews and to punish severely the publicans and sinners. They also eagerly looked forward to him purging the Holy Land of all the Gentiles there, particularly their Roman rulers.

They believed this because they had studied the prophecies concerning him – writings like the 24th Psalm, which ends with the triumphal cry: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

No matter that the psalmist made it clear that the King of Glory was Almighty God – "the Lord of Hosts." They simply assumed that this was poetic hyperbole and that the words actually applied to his human representative.

The Messiah they got turned out to be entirely different – the laid back, wisecracking adopted son of a carpenter from Galilee, the most unfashionable province in the holy Land. While this hick from the stix was certainly a direct

descendent of King David, there was nothing majestic about him – far from it. He, doubtless, spoke with an unfashionable Galilean accent. His entourage was composed of men and women most kindly described as motley. There were intellectuals like St. John; blow-hard provincial businessmen like St. Peter; barely reformed sinners like St. Matthew; and former terrorists like Judas Iscariot and Simon Zelotes – not an outfit to inspire confidence in decent church-going folk.

Nor was what he had to say about himself and his program reassuring. He claimed to be the Son of God – not in a metaphorical sense, but in concrete actuality. He claimed to have been alive long before Abraham and Moses existed and that they had met him and had been pleased to see him. He claimed that if you wanted to know what God was like all you had to do was look as him. On top of this, he denounced decent god-fearing people as hypocrites, while socializing with the dregs of society.

The impious way he talked about the Lord God of Israel – he called him “Daddy” – absolutely scandalized them. How, they asked, could the almighty God of Israel, who exacted harsh punishment for any impiety, have anointed such an outlandish character as his Messiah?

We, of course – with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight – know how wrong they were. We read the Old Testament and see how clearly God described whom his Messiah would be and the nature of the salvation he would bring. But the truly worrisome question that

confronts us is: “Will we recognize him when he comes again?”

Study of both Scripture and human nature, I would submit, indicates an answer that is by no means reassuring. At our shallowest, many folks today would probably be shocked if the Messiah spoke more like President Trump than the Archbishop of Canterbury. There are many who would be amazed if he arrived on anything other than a white horse.

Many of people would be disappointed if God’s priorities and goals did not turn out to be identical with their own. Many would be disappointed if he did not punish the people they deem to deserve punishment and reward those they deem worthy of reward. There are even those who would be disappointed if they were not issued angelic horses and given the privilege of witnessing the rest of us battling it out with the Anti-Christ on the plains of Armageddon.

I’m not saying these things won’t happen, but I am saying that, if the First Coming is anything to go by, things won’t necessarily pan out the way we expect. And the way to avoid the failures occasioned by our human nature is to seek God’s help in acquiring our most effective defense – humility, the paramount Christian virtue.

Humility enables us to recognize our true place in God’s great scheme of things –that our thoughts are not his thoughts and our ways are not his ways. In short, it enables us to accept fully that it is he is God and not we ourselves.” *AMEN. GPH*

St Stephen’s Anglican Church

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www.ststeve.com

The Very Rev. Guy P Hawtin, Dean & Rector
The Rev. John Novicki, Vicar ·
Associate Rectors:

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. C. Daniel Bursi,
The Rev. Dr. Norman Flowers,
The Rev. M. Wiley Hawks & The Rev. Mark Newsome,
Mrs Happy Riley, Director of Pastoral Care
& Wedding Coordinator

SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist
9.15am: Sung Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)
11am: Sung Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)
Choral Services (as announced) – evensong.ststeve.com

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6pm: Evening Prayer
Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist
Saturday, 5pm: Family Eucharist

Holy Week Schedule

MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER

April 6th, 7th & 8th — 6 PM, Holy Communion.

MAUNDY THURSDAY April 9th

7 PM, Choral Eucharist & Stripping the Altar

GOOD FRIDAY April 10th

NOON: Seven Last Words From The Cross
3.30 PM, Children's Way of the Cross
6 PM, Communion of the Presanctified

HOLY SATURDAY April 11th

7.00 PM, The Great Vigil & First Eucharist of Easter

EASTER DAY

Sunday, April 21st

8 AM: Said Holy Eucharist.

9.15 AM: Choral Eucharist,
(followed by an Easter Egg Hunt for children aged 7 and under).

11.00 AM: Choral Eucharist

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