

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A MEDITATION ON TRINITY VI

To err is human; to forgive ought to be human too

By human standards, scribes and Pharisees get a really bum rap in the Gospels. Whenever Jesus encounters them he either makes fun of them or he dresses them down, calling them rude names. Yet by human standards, they were quite admirable people.

They lived very active religious lives. Most of them went to church morning and evening. They studied the bible daily. They fasted at least twice a week. They tithed scrupulously everything they owned, down to the tiniest grain of salt. And, as a matter of principal, they gave amazingly generously to beggars, which is probably why we encounter so many of them in the New Testament.

And despite the fact that they knew they were "Chosen People" they didn't keep their faith to themselves. They were far more conscientious about their duty to spread the Gospel than most Christians today. They eagerly shared it with gentiles, and warmly welcomed them into their congregations as inquirers and converts.

Jesus was not exaggerating when he claimed they would travel to the ends of the earth to make a convert. It was thanks to the efforts of the scribes and Pharisees St. Paul and the early evangelists had a network of synagogues at their disposal that encompassed most of the cities and towns in the Roman Empire and beyond.

In fact, the rapid spread of the Christian Gospel in the 1st and 2nd Centuries A.D. can be attributed to the thorough groundwork laid by the Pharisee missionaries. Thanks to their efforts, most people in the Roman world were at least aware of the unique monotheistic nature of the Jewish faith and its almighty God.

Moreover, the synagogues provided ready pulpits from which to preach the Jesus' Gospel of salvation and congregations sufficiently well versed in the scripture to grasp its implications. In short, far from looking down on the scribes and Pharisee, we should give thanks that these good, kind, pious people paved the way for us.

It must, thus, have been a tremendous shock for the folks listening to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to learn that if they wanted to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they needed to be even more righteous than the most pious and charitable people ever. It was like telling Christians that to get into heaven they would have to be more pious than the Pope and more charitable than St. Francis of Assisi. It is an impossibly high standard.

Jesus, however, isn't talking about human standards of holiness. In the Sermon on the Mount he explains it is impossible for human beings to equal God's standards of holiness. It is impossible for us to love our fellow men as freely and fully as God loves us. God's standards are so immeasurably high, he says, they are quite beyond our comprehension.

By God's standard, for example, we don't even need to do people harm to incur God's wrath. The simple act of getting angry with someone else is enough to send us to hell. By God's standard of righteousness, we should not harbor even the slightest feelings of resentment. This is an impossibly high standard. Even the most high-minded find

minor resentments very hard to control. Even if we immediately try to suppress such thoughts, they remain lurking, ready to surface again. St. Paul aptly describes the human lot when he complains he is quite unable to do things he desperately wants to do and constantly doing things he utterly despises.

Jesus addresses the issue of forgiveness in St. Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount— pointing out that even the exceedingly high standards laid down in the Law of Moses do not anywhere near reach God's own standards of holiness.

He tells us that if we want to be like him, we must not resist those who want to do us harm. If someone hits us in the face, we should must turn our other cheek to the smiter. If we are sued in court for our jackets, we should give them our overcoats as well. If people compel us to walk a mile with them, we should go two miles with them. If

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: Bill, Pam, Eileen, Rebecca, Catherine, Richard✕, Janis, 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, 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:

THOSE WHO MOURN:

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

somebody seeks to borrow money, we should lend it without question. Moreover, we should love our enemies and persecutors, and do good to them and pray for them.

This is exactly what we see Jesus doing in the course of his ministry, particularly on the cross, when he freely forgave his enemies. But, sad to say, while we might be able to emulate him occasionally, we find it impossible to do so on a consistent basis.

Not least, we persuade ourselves that his way of doing things is utterly impractical – that if we adopted his model, the wheels of industry would cease to turn, government would cease to function and society would disintegrate.

Our complete inability to emulate our Lord does not, of course, take him by surprise. His purpose in the Sermon on the Mount is to demonstrate that there is no way that we can hope to meet God on equal terms – and that our concept of virtuous behavior is tawdry beyond belief when measured against God's own goodness. Our Lord's divine standards of behavior illustrate graphically why we so desperately need Jesus as our mediator when we stand before God's throne. **GPH✕**

FROM THE PARISH CLERGY

Vestry rules on Covid19

St. Stephen’s vestry has established guidelines that it hopes will enable the parish to operate with our consideration for everybody’s concerns during the epidemic. Most important is the manner in which the church should gradually reopen.

Two options were considered. One involved an immediate return to normal. The other was to proceed very much more cautiously. In the end, the vestry decided the most considerate course for the elderly, and those most at risk from the virus, would be to proceed with caution.

It was pointed out that although infections appeared to be diminishing and the worst of the epidemic was believed to have passed, it still presented a serious threat to the elderly and those with underlying health issues.

Therefore in order to encourage those concerned about the possibility of infection to return to church the most kindly and considerate course would be for everybody when congregating in the Cadwalader Room and at the altar rail) and to practice social distancing in the sanctuary. It was also decided to that, while organ

music would be permitted, there will be no singing in church until we receive an official go-ahead. Singing is believed to present a greater danger for the spread of the disease than speech as it expels a far greater volume of air dry the lungs.

Our Sunday service schedule will resume at 8.00 AM, 9.15 AM and 11.00 AM. We will celebrate the Eucharist at the first two services and resume the Morning Office at 11.00 AM when attendance picks up. In view of restrictions on school attendance ,Sunday School will be informal.

For shut-ins and folks still in quarantine we will be continuing our video recordings of Feast Day and Sunday Eucharists. These are posted on the **parish website (www.ststeve.com)**, **Youtube** and **Isaac the Eagle’s Facebook** page.

You’ll find them from 9.00 AM onwards every Sunday and Day of Obligation at **ststeve.com** at the bottom of the Home Page, under “Recent Blog Posts. A new midweek “broadcast” talk by the rector can also be found on the website every Wednesday or Thursday.

Meanwhile, in a bid to prevent the theft of checks mailed to the church, we have opened a Post Office Box for the exclusive use of the treasurer. Please mail your offerings to: **St Stephen’s Anglican Church, P.O. Box 6161, Timonium, MD 21094**. All other mail should be sent to our street address. **GPH✘ & JPN✘**

St Stephen’s Anglican Church

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Vicar: 410 878-5275 · Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

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)
11 am: 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

For Our Country.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favour and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honourable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogancy, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth.

In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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