



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY September 8 & BEYOND”

The following reflection was first published by the former Rector, Fr. McQueen, three years ago. I'm passing on a slightly revised version to you in its simplicity. I also have a few things more to say about Wisdom and Discernment, which run as a theme through the lessons for Sunday, as well, but important to add given an important Rector Search discernment meeting Saturday. That reflection is separate.

Will Philemon act with the love that God has?



Philemon and Onesimus

The second lesson for this Sunday, September 8, 2019, is St. Paul's one-chapter letter to Philemon. Here we have an example of the radical difference faith in Jesus makes in our lives and in the world, in regard to a different way of thinking about things, and the resultant decisions made.

The subject of the letter is a man named Onesimus, a slave who had run away from his master Philemon, who was a friend and convert of Paul's (a precious relationship to which Paul refers in the letter for emphasis!). Onesimus had made his way to Rome, where Paul was under house arrest. In Rome, under Paul's spiritual instruction, he, too, had become a Christian. Paul is now sending Onesimus back with this letter-note, asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him back not as a slave, but as a brother in Christ!

While the world would have seen this as unthinkable, Paul has every expectation that his request will be granted because – although Paul says he could demand it as Philemon's father in Christ -- he's asking Philemon to see this through the eyes of Jesus, on the basis of agape love – the “God-action love” that God has for us all.

Paul alludes to this when he prays that Philemon's sharing of the faith may become even more effective when he perceives all the good that we may do for Christ. The “world” tends to approach relationships from the perspective of justice, that is, the parties (sounds legalistic, doesn't it) fulfilling their duties and obligations and having their rights and interests protected. And that's good. However, it's not ALL the good that we can do for Jesus, or for each other. As Paul demonstrates in his appeal to Philemon. In this literal circumstance we

see the spiritual reality that when we show mercy, allowing our love to go beyond justice, relationships are transformed. Debts are paid, slavery becomes freedom, and bondage becomes brotherhood. This is in fact the basis of God's Wisdom.

And let's say it again, but more so, that it is critical to see that Paul doesn't impose this on Philemon, but invites him to choose the greatest good, and offers to pay the debt himself, if that helps. Ah! This is exactly what Jesus has done for US, paying our eternal debt so that we can be generous rather than stingy with our brothers and sisters.

So, let's make the application, shall we? Looking at our lives with the eyes of Jesus, are there any places where we're holding onto the idea of justice when what's really needed is mercy? We need to look for opportunities to make the same invitation, offering more than what's owed or expected, whether that means forgiveness and mercy or just a greater love. That's what it means to do all the good we can for Christ and it's what will make our faith most effective when we share it.

Readings for this Sunday – The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Psalm 1 Philemon 1-20 Luke 14:25-33

Reflection 2

Your prayers are necessary, and they must be informed in faith

All Saints' Parish is in prayer for the selection of a new Rector, while the Vestry is the Search Team, doing the work of reading, discerning, interviewing, making reference checks, conversing, and in prayer themselves. The lessons for Sunday (Proper 18C) are much about how that discernment is manifested as the obedient people of God. At the same time, perhaps, providentially, comes the following lesson appointed for Thursday in this week from the letter of James, chapter 3:13 through chapter 4:12.

It brings to the fore an important yet often overlooked aspect of Godly wisdom being sought by we followers of Christ. And that aspect is that wisdom, and discernment in the Spirit, are going to be by default, under attack by those spirits opposed to God. Its, literally, dangerous enough, as James denotes, that there is God's wisdom (wisdom from above) and there is an earthly, unspiritual wisdom. While we are praying that we only act upon the wisdom from above, setting aside our own sinful desires, the attack is on to get us to see it as an opposite!!

This reflection then is an acknowledgment that the reading from James is hard stuff, uncomfortable. Certainly, the Vestry gathered is a gathering of men and women subject to these kinds of divergent wisdom. But also take note: that this group of men and women are people of faith in Christ, they have been diligent in their duties, and they are in prayer. I am quite delighted in their Search work. They are doing their part; and they have been doing it quite successfully. But we CANNOT let slide that the Enemy is sly and crafty, and he does not

want the right Rector for All Saints!! So he will work to undermine such important meetings, and reflection prior to the meeting.

Please read the following in that light, and form your prayer for the spiritual protection of the Vestry members on Saturday, Sept 7, as they meet to choose who the Finalists will be. Add it to your Quadrena, which already has some element of this already. But bring that prayer you craft several times to the Lord.

Thank you.

Fr. Robert Eaton, Interim Rector

James 3:13 "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. ¹⁸And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Chapter 4:1 "What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? ²You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet^a and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶But he gives more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you."

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

8:30a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn Mass (Church)

12:30pn Diocese Discernment Meeting (Library)

AA Meeting

7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)

—The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

FRIDAY AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

SUNDAY The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

8:00am Low Mass (Church)

10:30am Solemn Mass (Church)

AA Meeting

12:30pn Diocese Discernment Meeting (Library)

7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)