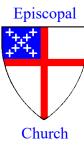
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The Rev. Julie E. Calhoun-Bryant, Priest-in-Charge

February 22, 2022

Dear Friends, here is last Sunday's sermon. I am feeling much better and am very grateful for your prayers. Thanks to Kate Bell for leading Emmanuel's service and Steve Pekich for leading St. Alban's in person service. (I lead the Zoom service from home.)

Jesus' words to us today are hard to hear, even for a devoted Christian: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. Really Jesus? Really.

It's one thing to say that God loves equally every single person who ever lived, or to say that there is no sin that the cross of Christ does not cover. It's another thing to live as though you believe that this is true, and that's exactly what Jesus expects of us. We'd prefer that there be exceptions to "love your enemies" or "turn the other cheek." It's unsettling to give up completely the right to retaliate, or, even more shockingly, to give up the right to hit back. We teach our sons never to throw the first punch, not never to throw a punch. We teach our daughters to stand up for themselves and not to let people take advantage of them. But this is not what Jesus teaches them. He tells our sons never to throw a punch at all, to stand there and take it. He tells our daughters to let the mean girls go on being mean and not to retaliate against them. Why would Jesus say these things. Surely his meaning must go beyond the obvious one of not escalating the violence. And it does.

Jesus calls on all Christians to act in love and grace toward all people. Act in love rather than react to unethical or violent behavior by responding with more of the same. Christians are to stand out by their actions, or by what they refuse to do because they are Christians. These are hard words to hear for they go against our nature - our fallen nature. The kingdom principles of love, forgiveness and generosity are to govern everything that we do. If an action is unkind, angry, or hateful, don't do it. If what you are about to say is hurtful or cruel, don't say it. Period.

In this month when we celebrate Black History, let us think for a moment about Martin Luther King, Jr. and his followers. As they began their march across the bridge in Selma for the right to vote they knew that they would be greeted by police wielding night sticks. They would be knocked down, bruised and broken, but they were not to retaliate. Their bravery and commitment to following Jesus' teaching to turn the other cheek sent a powerful message to televisions in homes across America, to the state capitol, and to the White House. Had they responded in kind and started a riot their witness would no longer have been a Christian witness. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his followers showed a nation full of prejudice and hate what it meant to love your enemies and pray for those who abuse you.

With remarkable insight into human nature the next thing Jesus says flips his teaching on its head as he says: If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those

who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. That brings us up short and puts us on notice! We want the recognition of doing nice things for those we love, but Jesus says, "No way." Be kind to the ungrateful and the wicked too, and you will be children of the Most High, because that's how children of the Most High are to act - again, act, not react. Take the initiative in being loving, forgiving, and generous. It may be that you are the first person in a long time to do so, and that can change a life.

We follow a God of love. Jesus allowed his back to be whipped, his face to be spit upon, and his body to be crucified without retaliating or directing his disciples to retaliate for him. Instead he took all the abuse, and then asked God to forgive them as he hung on the cross. Let all you do be done in love, for God loves you. Always forgive, for all your sins are forgiven. Never give up or let yourself lag in being a blessing to everyone, for God will never give up on you. Act as children of the Most High God, who is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked, and your reward will be great in heaven. Amen.

Ash Wednesday Services People from both parishes are welcome at either service!

March 2, 2022

Emmanuel: 3:00 p.m. In Person

St. Alban's: 5:45 p.m. In Person and on Zoom

Zoom Codes: 856 5878 9350 and 944174

Confirmation Classes are Wednesdays at 5:45 p.m. on Zoom

They are open to anyone who is interested in attending!

February 16: Sacraments

February 23: Book of Common Prayer

March 2: Ash Wednesday Service

March 9: English Reformation: Henry VIII and Edward VI March 16: English Reformation: Mary and Elizabeth I March 23: Beginning of The Episcopal Church in America

Zoom codes: 878 5399 0472 and 014354

In Person Schedule

Saturday Emmanuel Coffee Hour: 4:15 pm Worship: 5:00 p.m. Sunday St. Alban's Bible Study: 8:30 a.m. Worship: 9:30 a.m.

Coffee Hour: 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday Emmanuel Bible Study: 2:00 p.m.

Zoom Schedule & Codes

Sunday

8:30 a.m. Bible Study: **835 9000 0245 & 562087**

9:30 a.m. St. Alban's Holy Eucharist: 826 9515 6305 & 446765

Use your telephone for Zoom Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Dial 1-646-558-8656

When prompted Enter **826** 9515 6305#

When prompted Enter #

When prompted Enter 446765#

That will put you in Zoom's waiting room.

Tuesday

10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer: **824 6993 1403 & 680299**

Wednesday

2:00 p.m. Bible Study: **840 0349 8213 & 586548**

5:45 p.m. Confirmation Class: 878 5399 0472 and 014354

Thursday

6:00 p.m. Eat and Chat: **861 7759 3272** and **295096**

6:30 p.m. Mother Julie's Class

Mother Julie's Schedule for February 23 - March 2

EmmanuelSt. Alban'sDays OffSaturday: 4:00-6:30 p.m.SundayMondayWednesday: 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.Tuesday: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.Friday

Ash Wednesday service: 5:45 p.m.

Thursday: 12:00-8:00 p.m.