

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
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Emmanuel Episcopal Church
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The Rev. Julie E. Calhoun-Bryant,
Priest-in-Charge

Emmanuel

September 9 We will have a parish meeting about our financial situation at 4:15 p.m. during coffee hour. Decisions will need to be made before Mother Julie's contract expires on December 31, 2024. (Meeting will be on Zoom. Join the 5:00 p.m. service early.)

September 16 **Memorial Service for Thomas Ghent at 11:00 a.m.**

Tom is the long time partner of Father Gerry Beritela. A luncheon follows the service.

Needed: Side Salads, Desserts, Donations toward the purchase of sandwich trays

September 23 **Autumn Treasures Craft & Vendor Event
10:00-3:30**

Each vendor gives Emmanuel \$40 and an item to raffle. In addition, we will sell meatball subs and baked goods. Pamela Trendell is coordinating with the event organizer.

Needed: Kitchen workers for meatball subs and bakers for the bake sale. Please sign up to help!



East Side Episcopalians Annual Holy Eucharist and Picnic

September 24 at 11:00 a.m.
Ryder Park Pavilion next to the DeWitt Town Hall

Please sign up to attend and to bring a side dish or dessert!

Mother Julie's Sermon on Matthew 16:21-28

In last week's Gospel lesson Jesus blessed Peter, "Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah! ... And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

In this week's Gospel lesson Jesus rebukes Peter, "Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me."

So is Peter blessed or not? Which kind of stone is he, the rock on which Jesus will build his church or a stumbling stone for Jesus? The answer is, he's both.

Jesus blessed Peter for at least two reasons. Number one, Jesus believed that Peter received the knowledge that he was the "Messiah, the Son of the living God" through divine revelation. This knowledge was a gift from God to Peter. Number two, I think Jesus blessed Peter in spite of his character flaws, both because he could see in Peter the ability to lead the others once he was gone and also because of Peter's deep faith. It was his character flaws, however, that got Peter into trouble with Jesus.

When Peter recognized and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah he thought he knew what would happen next. Boy was he wrong! The common understanding of the Messiah at that time was that he would be a descendant of King David, and like David, a great king with the ability to amass a mighty army. Popular tradition had it that the Messiah would reveal himself from the pinnacle of the Temple and lead the people to victory over Israel's enemies, ushering in an era of great prosperity. What a glorious future that would be! When Jesus blessed Peter this is what his head was filled with. He, Peter, would be Jesus' right hand man. This was a vision of glory!

...What's that Jesus is saying? "He must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." That can't be right, thought Peter. The Messiah inflicts suffering and death on his enemies, he doesn't suffer and die himself. And so Peter told Jesus he was wrong. And Jesus firmly rebuked Peter in the harshest words: Get behind me, Satan!

So why was Jesus so harsh? Peter didn't yet know that he would be following a crucified Lord. In all fairness to Jesus, he had just tried to tell him. In fact, the Gospels contain three separate times that Jesus warned them what would happen when they reached Jerusalem. Peter had no mental category to file the information in and make sense of it. Those of us old enough to remember 9-11 should be able to relate to Peter. We watched the twin towers pancake to the ground and couldn't believe what we were seeing with our own eyes. We had no mental category to put an event like that into. So we watched it over and over again during the next few days until the reality of what happened sank in. Like, Peter we had no category that fit.

So why was Jesus so harsh? What Peter couldn't know in that moment was that Jesus' greatest temptation was to not be crucified, to play it safe. After Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in the manner of a Jewish king there was no turning back. But this was before Palm Sunday. They were still on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus still had time to change his mind or try to find another way. While Jesus never sought crucifixion, he accepted that it was the inevitable result of what he was going to do when they reached the capitol city. If Jesus had Peter telling him that he was wrong the whole way to Jerusalem he might succumb to his fear of being crucified.

There's more going on here, though. Jesus recognized in Peter's words one of the temptations Satan put to him at the end of his forty days in the wilderness following his baptism. Jesus understood that this was a trap Satan set up to try to get to Jesus through Peter - hence the words, "Get behind me, Satan!" Satan couldn't tempt Jesus directly, so he would work through one of Jesus' disciples. Jesus rebuked Peter so that Satan could not work through him, albeit unintentionally and unknowingly on Peter's part.

This begs the question, "How do we know that we are following God's will and not being led astray?" That's what Jesus talks about with his disciples next: what it means to be his disciple. He tells them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." We aren't taught to deny ourselves, let alone to suffer for someone else. It's completely countercultural. People lie and cheat to get ahead all the time, and society looks the other way. It's expected. However, denying oneself is not an easy thing to do even if it was the cultural norm. To be clear, to deny oneself doesn't mean to give up a particular pleasure such as not eating that piece of chocolate cake because you're on a diet. To deny oneself doesn't mean not to spend on a luxury in order to pay your bills. Nor does it mean to learn how to be content with what you have.

To deny oneself as Jesus did is to give up the right to live life your way and hand the reins over to God. To deny yourself is to make yourself God's servant to command. To put it another way, it is to make God's dream for your life your dream, to make God's plan your plan. Peter tried to make his dream God's dream, not the other way around. That didn't work.

Staying tuned in to God's plan takes a lot of time and effort. It's so much easier to live your own life the way you want to. But is it more rewarding? When I began leading a capital campaign to build a parish hall for St. Luke's in Camillus I was in the middle of our second adoption process. I realized to my dismay that I had to put the adoption process on hold; I couldn't do both at the same time. So I told God that I would do the work I was called to do at the church, but to remember me when the work was finished. God timed it such that while parish life slowed down for a few months due to the construction I was on leave with my newborn son Christopher. I don't always get it right, but that time I did!

To deny oneself as Jesus did also means always to put others' needs first and to live for them. Who is God asking you to minister to? Don't assume anything. You could be right where God wants you or you could be directing your energies in the wrong place. If you choose to live for God and not for yourself some surprising opportunities will open up. Ask God where you should be. If you're in a period of discernment or at a crossroads ask others to pray with you. We're on this Christian journey together.

One last thing, Jesus warns us not to live for ourselves. Those who do this will lose in the end. Those who live for God will save their souls and gain eternal life. The suffering and death of Jesus for all humankind is not the end of his life. It is the beginning of our lives if we choose to follow Jesus. As inevitable as suffering and death are in this life, they do not have the last word. The last word belongs to God. The powers that be crucified the Lord of glory and thought they had won. As long as we live in a world filled with the power of evil there will be suffering and sacrifice for those who choose to live for God. But we serve a crucified and risen Lord. Never forget that part. Suffering for the sake of the Gospel will always be redeemed, if not in this life than in the next. Amen.

Thursday Evenings on Zoom

Zoom Codes: 836 0660 6389 and 371096

Sept. 14 Service of Healing and Holy Eucharist, 7:00 p.m. (at St. Alban's)
 Sept. 21 Sacred Ground, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-8:00 - Session 1
 Sept. 28 Rule of Life, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-7:30 - Meeting

Oct. 5 Sacred Ground, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-8:00 - Session 2

Oct. 12 Classical Music Concert Preview, 7:00 p.m. (at St. Alban's)
Katerina Skafidas and Kyle Seniw, Vocalists
Cynthia Bromka-Skafidas, Pianist

Oct. 19 Sacred Ground, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-8:00 - Session 3
 Oct. 26 Rule of Life, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-7:30 - Meeting

Nov. 2 Sacred Ground, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-8:00 - Session 4
 Nov. 9 Service of Healing and Holy Eucharist, 7:00 p.m. (at St. Alban's)
 Nov. 16 Sacred Ground, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-8:00 - Session 5
 Nov. 23 *** Thanksgiving Day ***
 Nov. 30 Sacred Ground, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-8:00 - Session 6

Dec. 7 Service of Healing and Holy Eucharist, 7:00 p.m. (at St. Alban's)
 *** Moved to First Thursday this month ***
 Dec. 14 Sacred Ground, 6:00 - Eat & Chat, 6:30-8:00 - Session 7



Second Thursdays at St. Alban's: September 14
6:00 p.m. Chinese Takeout Dinner, \$7
Please sign up so Mother Julie can order the food.
7:00 p.m. Healing and Holy Eucharist
(also on Zoom)

Food Drive for InterFaith Works 20+ Food Pantries

September and October

Pasta and Sauce
 Canned Fruits
 Peanut Butter
 Jelly
 Canned Vegetables
 Soups/Ramen
 Ensure
 Cake mix/frosting



Canned Tuna/Chicken
 Vegetable Oil
 Cereal/Oatmeal
 Baby formula
 Pancake mix/syrup
 Flour and sugar
 Mayo
 Shelf Stable Milk

In Person Schedule: Both Parishes & Friends are Welcome!

Saturday	Emmanuel Home	* 4:15 p.m.: Parish Meeting at Coffee Hour 5:00 p.m.: Holy Eucharist, Church School on Sept. 9 & 23
Sunday	St. Alban's	* 8:30 a.m.: Bible Study * 9:30 a.m.: Holy Eucharist 10:30 a.m.: Coffee Hour

* also on Zoom

Zoom Schedule & Codes

Saturday
 5:00 p.m. Emmanuel: 812 9701 3112 & 381729

Sunday
 8:30 a.m. Bible Study: 825 2837 9378 & 695433
 9:30 a.m. St. Alban's: 826 9515 6305 & 446765

Tuesday
 10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer: 817 4372 7305 & 891158

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

Thursdays 836 0660 6389 and 371096