

The Parish Paper

OF

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol. 46 No. 39

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

September 6th, 2015

NEXT SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH

Sunday School Start-Up!

9:30 a.m. Registration & Parents' Meeting

PLAYING BY THE RULES

Inside most human beings – sometimes deep down, sometimes close to the surface – is the assumption that if we play by the rules (however they may be defined), God (or maybe ‘the universe’) owes us a happy life, answers to prayer, and heaven when we die (or equivalent). God functions as a kind of insurance, making our lives go according to (our) plan. That’s God’s *job*. (*C’est son métier*). That’s what religion and morality are *for*.

This outlook is called legalism or moralism or “works righteousness”; and something like it is the default setting of all human beings. In the New Testament it is the position associated with the Pharisees, Scribes, and Lawyers (experts in the Law of Moses), for whom a strict observance of the Law of Moses was treated (at least functionally) as the real ground of acceptance by Israel’s God. Many Christians operate with this view of their own religion – even though the teaching of Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament is a sustained critique and refutation of legalism. All of which is to say, that legalism or works-righteousness is the particular temptation of the religious and respectable.

One prime example of a legalist is the Lawyer in last Sunday’s gospel (St. Luke 10:23-37), who thinks that he must *do* something to inherit eternal life in the kingdom of God; and that this obligation is defined by the Law, and summed up in the double commandment of Love of God and

neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18), on the basis of which he hopes to justify himself – that is, be approved as righteous for doing the works commanded in the Law. As I mentioned last Sunday, the parable of the Good Samaritan is told by Jesus precisely to blow up that expectation, but in the epistle lesson for that day, Galatians 3:16-22, Paul is even more explicit. First, he says, the inheritance of eternal life is grounded on God’s gracious and unconditional promise made in the covenant with Abraham, not on man’s observance of the Law, which came four hundred years later. The Law was added, not to replace or modify the promise, but “because of transgressions”, which probably means (as we know from other places in Paul), in order to make explicit to man that justification by doing the works of the law is impossible. “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded [i.e. locked up] all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe”. The law condemns man’s sin, precisely so that man may discover that he is not justified by his own works, but the free gift of God’s grace received by means of faith.

Put thus in its objective form, the question of justification may seem abstract and remote. The quest for righteousness through works of the Law has a very different effect in the personality than the righteousness of faith. The doctrine is not merely a conceptual construct, but an entire

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1 WEST MACON STREET
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31401

The Parish Paper of St. John's Church (USPS 887-960) is published weekly by St. John's Church, One West Macon Street, Savannah, Georgia 31401. Periodicals postage paid at Savannah, Georgia. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. John's Church, 1 W. Macon St., Savannah, GA 31401.

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STANDING NOTICES

The occasional Sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Penance, Communion and Unction of the Sick, and the Office of Burial of the Dead are always available by appointment, at announced times, or as necessary.

HOSPITAL VISITATIONS

Please call the Church Office to inform the clergy if you or a loved one is in the hospital.

ST. JOHN'S WEB SITE

Parish Paper essays may be read on our web site: www.stjohnssav.org

VESTRY OFFERING CHAIRMEN

8:00 Mr. Arthur D. Weed
10:30 Mr. Wm. Howard Helmken, Jr.

USHER CHAIRMAN

Mr. J. Earl Gilbreath

The altar flowers are given to the glory of God:

and in loving memory of loved ones by Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Radford by Mr. and Mrs. John E. Roller;

and in loving memory of Frank Perdue Lee by his family;

and in loving memory of Captain Harry E. Jennings by Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. E. Jennings, Nolan and Alex;

and in loving memory of my parents, Sumner and Virginia Farwell, married Saturday September 6, 1947, by Rence Schmidt.

CHANCEL SOCIETY

Mrs. Carter C. Hubbard, Sr., Mrs. Jayne G. Holland, Mrs. John G. Bradshaw, Jr., Mrs. Nicholas K. Farley Mrs. Martin R. Sullivan, Mrs. B. Ray Summerell, Mrs. Roland S. Summers, Mrs. Marie Simmons

ACOLYTES

8:00 Henry Osborne
10:30 Jamie McClellan
Hawkins Pindar
Phillip Inglesby
Jackson McClellan

COFFEE HOUR CHAIRMAN

Mrs. Richard C. E. Jennings

ADULT EDUCATION SUNDAY 9:30 A.M.

9:30 a.m. *St. John's Gospel*, led by Fr Dunbar, Reading Room.

MEN'S WEEKDAY STUDY & DISCUSSION

Tuesday 6:45 a.m. Breakfast and Discussion on with Fr O'Brien, Parish House.

Thursday 7 a.m., *2 Kings*, Fr. Dunbar, Reading Room, Cranmer Hall

DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

Wednesday, September 9.

Evening Prayer at 5:30 p.m. (Chapel) and Study at 6:00 - Chapter 4 of Timothy Keller's *Prayer*. For more information, email Karen Wray at kcwray@yahoo.com.

PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL

outlook and attitude that permeates one's entire personality and life. Legalists invest huge amounts of energy in playing by the rules. All of their energy is focused on perfect performance and full compliance. Given the demands that the Law makes on man, however, they tend to whittle down its requirements through careful interpretation, and 'majoring in the minors': "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23).

The assumption of the legalists, as we have said, is that playing by the rules puts God under obligation, that God owes them a smooth road. When the smooth road does not appear, they become angry with God. They feel they are owed something they are not getting – and this also turns to anger at others who seem to be doing better than they are in some way. When they know they have fallen short, however, they become angry with themselves, and not in a good way, but in guilt and self-loathing.

The insecurity of the legalist manifests itself also in self-righteous pride, an inordinate sense of moral or religious superiority, which must be shored up by harshly judgmental assessments of others. Putting others down is a great way of feeling better about yourself!

For the legalist, the good works are not intrinsically valuable, but are means by which we may put God under obligation. They are done as means of controlling one's life. Naturally, the labour involved is anything but a "labour of love". It is joyless, slavish drudgery, and its fundamental motive is fear. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it is no fun being a legalist - which is why so many people revolt against legalism and go to the other extreme, of license (rebellious self-indulgence), which is just legalism

in reverse (and often highly legalistic in its own way). Even the legalists revolt against legalism – albeit in a secrecy that stokes their guilt, fear, and anger. But such rebellions do not rescue us from its bondage.

As last Sunday's gospel lesson shows us, only when we know ourselves hopeless and helpless in the ditch, and find ourselves rescued by the one we despised and rejected (which is what the Samaritan represents) will we be set free from this bondage, and our hearts be changed. When righteousness is a gift of undeserved and unlooked-for grace we are set free from the chains of resentment, fear, and pride, and guilt gives way to the gratitude of faith. Where unlooked-for grace is received by grateful faith, love is born, and the entire motivational basis of the moral life changes. As Saint Paul says, love is the fulfilling of the law; because if you love Christ, and if you love your neighbor for Christ's sake, then serving him as fully as you can will be not drudgery but delight.

There are not many Christians (myself included) who do not have a broad legalistic streak in them – it is the nature we are born with – and so it is as important for us to repent of the legalism of our good works as it is for us to know the undeserved grace of God to us in Jesus Christ. GGD

PARISH KALENDAR THIS WEEK

The Church Office is closed Monday for Labor Day. There will be No Daily Services.

Tuesday, September 8th

NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

*Holy Communion with
Morning or Evening Prayer
8:15 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.*

Wednesday to Friday

*Morning and Evening Prayer
8:15 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.*

In addition, on Wednesday

9:45 a.m. Litany 10 a.m. Eucharist

8:00 A.M. – HOLY COMMUNION

COLLECTS, EPISTLE, and GOSPEL Prayer Book, p. 209
A continental breakfast is available in Cranmer Hall following this service.

9:30-12:00 (Noon)—Nursery (*Cranmer Hall*)

9:30-10:15 A.M.—ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (*Cranmer Hall*)

9:30 a.m. – Noon—Preschool-Kindergarten Summer Program
 (*Cranmer Hall –activities for children during the 9:30 education and/or 10:30 service times*)

10:30 A.M.—MORNING PRAYER AND SERMON

HYMN #474 *O Day of Rest and Gladness* Woodbird
 Sentences, Confession, Absolution & Lord’s Prayer..... Prayer Book pp. 3-7
 Versicles and Responses..... 7-8
 VENITE Hymnal #609 9
 Psalms #106 *Gratitude and ingratitude for the Lord’s gracious gifts* 472
 First Lesson: 2 Kings 5: *The cleansing from leprosy of Naaman the Syrian.*
 TE DEUM #615, 619 11
 Second Lesson: Galatians 5:16-24 and Luke 17:11-19 209
 BENEDICTUS Hymnal #634 14
Children may exit following the cross for PSALM PSINGERS (Gr 1-5).
 Apostles' Creed..... 15
 Versicles and Responses..... 16
 Collects of the Day 209
 Other Collects and Prayers, the Grace 17-20
 HYMN [Insert] *I Feel the Winds of God Today*..... Kingsfold (#101)
 SERMON..... Fr. Dunbar

OFFERING

Sentences
 Anthem: *Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies*Gerald H. Knight
(Text found at Hymn # 153)
 Presentation of Alms: Doxology #139, and Hymn #141 (verse 4)
 Prayer and Blessing
 HYMN #302 *O That I Had a Thousand Voices* Mentzer
 VOLUNTARY: *Fanfare In C*..... Steven Blackmon

*Everyone is invited to attend Coffee Hour in the Green Meldrim House immediately after the 10:30 service.
 If you are a guest and visiting our Parish, please make yourself known.*