

THE LION

Volume 10

October /November 2015

Issue 2

Message from the Rector

“...let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak...”

St James 1:19

(Part I)

Several people asked me to post a sermon that I preached on Trinity 14. What follows is a slight revision and answer to that request.

A number of years ago I had someone come up to me after a service to complain about a sermon that I had just preached. What this person was complaining about was the fact that neither my sermon that day, nor the passage that I based my sermon on, made her feel particularly good. As a matter of fact, as far as she was concerned, most of my sermons didn't make her feel particularly good; and in her mind that was my primary job as a preacher: I was supposed to use my time in the pulpit to put a positive spin on things, and help people feel good about themselves, *not* constantly be telling people just how bad they really are (her words, not mine).

Well, she went on like that for a bit; and when she finished I said to her, “You know, my job as a preacher *isn't* to stand up in the pulpit and make people feel good or bad or anything else in between. Instead, my job as a preacher is to be faithful to the Biblical text and tell people the *truth* out of that Biblical text. Sometimes that truth makes people feel good, and sometimes it does not. That is just the way it is.”

Now what blessed lady inadvertently pointed out that day is that the Epistle of St James, upon which that sermon was based, falls into that category: sometimes it makes us feel pretty good about ourselves, and sometimes it does not. As a matter of fact, I would argue that most of the time it does not. And I say that because most of the time, if we are paying any attention to the text at all, what we come away with is a feeling of uneasiness because more often than not, what we are confronted with in that epistle is a picture of ourselves, and it is a picture that most of us don't particularly like.

This is especially true when we are confronted with what St James says about the tongue. All-too-often, all-too-many of us are “slow to hear and quick to speak” instead of being “quick to hear and slow to speak” as he tells us to be. In other words, all-too-often we are all-too-quick to share our generally unsolicited comments and opinions instead of keeping them to ourselves.

And if we don't believe that, all we have to do is think about the many times when, instead of just keeping our generally unsolicited comments and opinions to ourselves, we have just gone ahead and given free-reign to them only to later say to ourselves, “Oh, why did I say that?” or “Oh, I wish I hadn't said that” or “Oh, did I really say what I thought I just said?” I don't think that there is one,

Message from the Rector – continued

single person who hasn't allowed his or her tongue to go into gear long before his or her brain has had the chance to catch up. And with some of us, that happens a lot more often than we would either like to think, remember, or maybe even admit. It is something that, on one level or another, is common to us all.

But do you know something? The shame and the embarrassment that we often feel, or at least *ought* to feel, ourselves is nothing compared to the pain and the embarrassment that others feel when they are on the receiving end of our tongues. And although we may be able to apologize and mend our relationships, and even though our friendships might be put back on track, once those words are out of our mouths there is absolutely *nothing* that we can do to take them back. How can we un-say anything that we have said? Or, as a friend of mine likes to say, "How do you un-ring a bell?" It simply cannot be done. And the scars that are often left behind *always* be left behind. So we truly do need to be quick to hear, and most importantly very, very slow to speak.

But there is a corollary to this, and I think that it is a corollary that speaks volumes to the Church today, especially to a Church that is now trying to survive in the post-Christian culture in which we now live, and that corollary is this: We need to be even more careful today about what we are saying and how we are saying it, because people who are outside the Church and who don't claim to be followers of our Lord take notice of the things we say and the way we say them, and many, if not most, of those very same people judge the reality of our Christian faith based on it. So whether we realize it or not, or whether we want to admit it or not, every ill-thought comment and every misplaced word potentially has an impact on what people *outside* the Church think about our faith.

And is that the kind of "evangelism" that our Lord wants us to have?—you know, the kind of evangelism that pushes people *away* from our Lord and his Church instead of drawing them to it? Is that the kind of "negative evangelism" that our Lord wants us to show to the world?—an evangelism that shows to the world that our faith really hasn't made any difference in our lives either? When I am faced with that question, I always come back to what Ghandi once said: "I like your Christ, [but] I don't like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." We need to be Christlike in our lives if we aren't going to be a barrier to belief; and a big part of being Christlike is learning to control our tongues.

Let me mention one other thing. Whether we are reading this and saying to ourselves, "Yep, he's talking about me," or perhaps in our own self-righteousness we are reading it and saying to ourselves, "Boy, I sure hope Ol' So-and-So is reading this," *all of us* need to be very, very careful to pay very close attention to what St James is saying to us; because each one of us has a choice to make: we can either be like the man or the woman who observes his or her face in a mirror and then makes the changes that need to be made in order to become more and more like Jesus Christ in his or her life, or we can be like the man or the woman who beholds his or her face in the mirror and then forgets entirely what he or she has just seen. That is the choice that we all have to make: to live our lives the way our Lord both wants *and expects* us to live them, or to just live them "business as usual." And please *do not* be fooled: one way or the other we *will* make a choice. Let's just be sure to make the right one.

Message from the Rector – continued

St James tells us to be swift to hear and slow to speak, controlling our tongues at all times and in all places so that we can be more and more like Jesus each and every day. May our lives—and our words—truly be a reflection of him. And as they are, may the blessing of his peace rest in our hearts forever. Amen.

Do You Seek A Quiet Place To Pray

Joyce Smith

I spend a lot of time alone these days, and it seems like I am always looking for a quiet place to pray. I want it to be special and one where I won't be disturbed. I chose more often the place beside my bed where I sleep. I call it my place for moments of Solitude. In Isaiah 30:15 it says, "I n returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (KJV). When I was attending the Indian River Community College in 1994, I took a mandatory History class and it covered the life of Christ. It was like a light went on in my mind that caused me to realize that God was real. God really did come down and take the form of man and he died for me and my sins. I have not been the same since. When I feel down and lonely I reach for HIS WORD such as what he gave to King David in his loneliness, "Be still and know that I am God" (KJV: Psalm 46:10) and in some magical way it is calming and I turn my thoughts away from my own troubles and put my trust in HIM.

We should all purposely make plans to spend time in prayer with the Lord. They are truly precious moments of solitude.

ACW News

Linda Philpott

The ACW began its year with a planning meeting and taco luncheon on Thursday, September 17th. The October meeting will be on Thursday, October 15th at 10:30 in the parish hall. The guest speaker will be Robin Diaz, Executive Director of the Source, with a potluck lunch to follow.

The November meeting will be held on Thursday, November 19th at 10:30. The meeting will be held at Florida Veggies with Dan and Lisa Brenneman as hosts. They will be showing us around the farm. Please bring a covered dish to share.

We are calling all bakers. The ACW will be holding its first "Cookie Walk" on Saturday, December 5th from 9am -1pm in the parish hall. Please come pick up a container for \$10 and fill them with wonderful homemade cookies to have on hand for the holidays. If you wish to contribute, just make one recipe of your favorite cookies and bring them to the parish hall by 8 am on December 5th. The monies raised will go to church projects. Please see Linda Philpott, if you wish to bake or help out with the event.

Upcoming Holy Days

October/November/December

October 28 (noon) – Feast of Saint Simon and St Jude, Apostles
November 26 (10:00 a.m.) – Thanksgiving Day
November 30 (noon) – Feast of St Andrew the Apostle
December 21 (noon) – Feast of St Thomas the Apostle
December 24 (11:30 p.m.) – Carols/Midnight Mass (*with incense*)
December 25 (10:00 a.m.) – Christmas Day
December 26 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr
December 28 (noon) – Feast of the Holy Innocents

St. Mark's Anglican Church

Rev. Canon Michael L. Ward, SSA

Rector

Rev. Mr. Randall Russell

Curate

1795 – 45th Street

Vero Beach, Florida

772-563-0450

www.stmarksvero.org

P.O. Box 6994

Vero Beach, FL 32961-6994