

# THE LION

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## *Message from the Rector*

*“The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few....”*

**St. Luke 10:2**

*N.B. This sermon was preached by Fr. Mike at our recent diocesan synod.*

A couple of weeks ago I watched a YouTube video that Fr. Wade Miller had posted to his Facebook page, and what this video was was a rather short interview with both Dr. Mark Noll and Dr. George Marsden about the question of whether or not our nation was founded as a *specifically* Christian nation. Now, both Dr. Marsden and Dr. Noll are historians by profession, Dr. Marsden having now retired as the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, while Dr. Noll is now filling that role; and the area of expertise of both of these gentlemen is the history of Christianity in America, specifically the history of *evangelical* Christianity in America. As a matter of fact, a number of years ago the two of them collaborated with another historian, Dr. Nathan Hatch now of Wake Forest University, on a book entitled *The Search For Christian America*, which again deals with the question of whether or not our nation was founded as a *specifically* Christian nation.

Now, the *Cliff's Notes* answer to that question, according to Dr. Marsden and Dr. Noll, is a lot more nuanced than most people would like to think; but what I do think that just about everyone agrees on is this: even if our nation wasn't *consciously* founded as a specifically Christian nation, it was nevertheless founded on things like freedom and justice and liberty and individual responsibility things like that—things that *are* very biblical in nature, and that *do* flow quite naturally from a specifically Christian ethos. And the fact that we as a nation have been able to more or less continue to operate *from* that specifically Christian ethos is a blessing that we should all truly thank God for.

But one of the questions that I often hear posed by Christians—especially by older Christians who often look back nostalgically to some supposed “Golden Age of Christianity” in our nation's history, whether or not that “Golden Age” actually ever did really exist—is just how much longer that blessing is going to last. I mean, when we look around us right now, and when we see all of the things that simply fly in the face of all of the things that we have traditionally held dear, I suppose that it is only natural for us to wonder just how much longer God is going to put up with it before he finally says to us, “Enough is enough,” and then withdraws his hand from us. How much longer *is* our nation going to be blessed?

But I wonder if that might not be the *wrong* question to ask. And I say that because there is a biblical principle that seems to get lost in all of this talk about both our nation's future and its past, and that biblical principle is this: a nation—*any* nation, and that includes *our* nation—is only as blessed as is the faithfulness of the Church within its borders. And so what that means is this: as God blesses his people those blessings spill out into the nation in which they dwell. That is just a biblical fact. Think of Joseph down in Egypt: there wasn't anything special about Egypt: Egypt was blessed because Joseph was there (cf. Gn 41:46ff).

So to ask the question, “When will God look at us *as a nation* and say to us, ‘Enough is enough’?” is really the wrong question to ask. I think the real question to ask is this: “When will God look at his *Church*—when will he look at his *people*—and say to us, ‘Enough is enough.’” In other words, when will God look at *us* and say, “Why aren't you doing the things that I have *commanded* you to do in order to keep me from saying to you, ‘Enough is enough’?” *That*, I think, is the real question to ask.

*Message from the Rector – continued*

So again, when we look around us and see all of the things that just fly in the face of everything that we have traditionally held dear, maybe in some ways we really have no one else to blame but ourselves—not entirely, obviously, but I do think that we have to shoulder much of the blame; because, you see, in a lot of ways what most of us *haven't* been doing is the *one* thing that our Lord really wants us to do, and that is to both tell people about him *and* make disciples of those people as well. That is the one thing that he most wants us to do: tell people about him and make disciples of them as well. But quite frankly it is also the one thing that most of us simply *haven't* been doing.

Now, there are probably any number of reasons that we can come up with as to why it is that we haven't been doing that, but quite frankly I think the biggest reason is pretty simple: we've never had to. We've never really had to talk about Jesus and his kingdom because we—and everyone else in this country—have just been living off our nation's common cultural Christian ethos for the last two-hundred-forty-three years.

But folks, that common cultural Christian ethos, or that “bank” of common “Christian Capital” as I often call it, that we have inherited has pretty much been exhausted. And now we are living in a time when mind-sets have changed, life-styles have changed, what were once religious minorities are rapidly becoming *not* religious minorities anymore; and unfortunately we—and I'm talking about our Lord's Church here—just haven't kept up. We haven't been adding to that bank of common Christian Capital that we have inherited from the past. And because of that, the days of “If you build it they will come” are simply over, because in a lot of ways the days of people looking for a Church with substance and tradition and values and things like that—or, increasingly, the days of people looking for any type of Church at all—have more or less passed. Maybe Alasdair MacIntyre (cf. *After Virtue*) and Rod Dreher (cf. *The Benedict Option*) are right: maybe we really are entering a new “Dark Age” of Christendom. But to continue to point back to our nation's history, like so many of us like to do, without also doing what needs to be done in order to actually secure the future of the Church within her borders, well that really is just a great big fat waste of time: frustrating, to be sure, when people just don't seem to either pay attention to us or even really care anymore; but more importantly it's also just a big fat waste of time.

And besides: inactivity on our part *isn't* what made our nation great to begin with, is it? What made our nation great is the strength and faithfulness of the Church within her borders.

So what is it, then, that we—the Church—need to do in order to help insure that our children and our children's children will be able to live in a land that still has God's blessing on it? Well, the answer to that question really isn't any sort of mystery at all: we need to once again get serious about our own Christian walk with our Lord *and* at the very same time get serious about evangelizing for him and his Church. In other words, we need to get serious about living as good subjects of his kingdom.

And by the way, *that* is a message that we need to get straight as well: the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about him being the king and us being subjects of *his kingdom*. It isn't all about being saved so we can go to heaven when we die: that's a piece of the puzzle but it isn't the entire picture. The Gospel is about Jesus being him being the *king* of all creation and us being good subjects of his kingdom—with *everything* that that means.

And that is the message that we need to go out and declare. That is the way the Apostles did it, that is the way the early Church did it, and that is the way that it has always been done down through the ages, wherever God's people might be: living our lives as good subjects of our Lord's kingdom—with everything that that means—and inviting others to live their lives in that kingdom as well. You see, the faithfulness of God's people to that call is the *only* way that our Church *and* our nation will retain God's blessing, and it is the *only* way to reclaim the world for Jesus Christ.

“The harvest is plentiful,” Jesus said, “but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his fields.” Our church, our nation, and our world depends on it. Let us all be faithful subjects of our king. And as we are, may the blessing of his peace rest upon us forever. Amen.

## ***Music Notes***

Kathleen Knott, Music Director/Organist

### **Morning Songs**

There are two especially beautiful hymns in the first section of our *1982 Hymnal* that celebrate morning. Hymn 1 is based on the tune *Christe sanctorum* from 1681. The text is attributed to Pope Gregory the Great. Even though he was born into wealth and privilege he considered himself a “servant among servants.” He codified Gregorian Chant and was “second to none in Roman grammar, rhetoric, and logic.”

Vs. 1    Father we praise Thee, now the night is over,  
             active and watchful, stand we all before thee;  
             singing we offer prayer and meditation:  
             thus we adore thee.

Hymn 9 features an American melody from *Kentucky Harmony*. The tune is attributed to Elkannah Kelsay Dare (1782-1826). The words were written by Geoffrey Anketel Studdert-Kennedy (1883-1929). He was an English born Anglican Priest who distinguished himself as a chaplain in World War I and was awarded the Military Cross for running into “no man’s land” to help the wounded. After the war he was converted to Christian socialism and pacifism. His words in Hymn 9 remind us to “awake to love and work” and “to serve right gloriously the God who gave all worlds that are.” In addition, the beauty of the seasons is depicted in the language of this hymn.

Vs. 2    The royal robes of autumn moors,  
             the golden gates of spring,  
             the velvet of soft summer nights,  
             the silver glittering of all the million million stars,  
             the silent song they sing.

## ***For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel***

*Reflections of a Parishioner*

Jay G. Philpott

The Sacrament of Holy Communion/the Mass/the Eucharist

In many churches you will see the altar adorned (sometimes in marble, or in wood or with a beautiful tapestry) with large letters saying:

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Seasoned Christians finally realize that taking Holy Communion is one of the best ways to meet the Lord, to remember who he is and what he has done for mankind and for themselves. There are many reasons and benefits in participating in the quite lengthy service and in walking up to the altar and kneeling at the rail.

Many people come to the table for solace, for strength, for comfort in their present circumstances. Many people ask for pardon and renewal, restoration and redemption. Some come for guidance, healing, courage, while others are cognizant of their duty to God to thank him for providing his son to take their sin upon him and to secure their salvation through faith, belief and obedience.

Holy Communion provides us with an anchor; the beautiful words of the liturgy, perhaps enhanced by beautiful hymns and anthems and the music provided by oboe, organ or violin or trumpet, all these things enrich our lives and are truly edifying to us and pleasing to the Lord. But they must be in conjunction with our prayers to him of thankfulness, repentance, and vows to amend our lives. He wants truth and sincerity, otherwise all the rest of it stinks in his nostrils. So let us, the weary, COME UNTO HIM and bless him for who he is and for what he has done for us, and for the hope he gives the sheep of his pasture.

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## ***Recommended Reading***

Wanza Murray, Rector's Warden

### **“The Anglican Way”**

Thomas McKenzie

*About the author:* The Rev. Thomas McKenzie is the pastor of a growing church, and the congregation is largely made up of people who were not raised in the Anglican tradition. Fr. McKenzie noted that as people became part of their Church, they found a beautiful and rich faith, but one that was unfamiliar to most of them. According to him, visitors, newcomers, and members alike asked him for a guidebook. Noting that a practical and up-to-date introduction to living and worshipping as an Anglican Christian did not exist, he decided to write one.

*Who would want to read this book?* One who grew up in some other denomination and wants to know how to connect with this one. One who needs help in explaining Anglicanism. One who has been going to church for a long time, but would like to understand more about the Anglican tradition. Anglican pastors who would like a resource for one who asks, “Is there a book about all this Anglican stuff?”

*About the book:* The book is divided into four parts. “Part I: THE COMPASS ROSE” is about the generous nature of Anglicanism and its history and philosophy. “Part II: WALKING THE ANGLICAN WAY” is there to help one live as an Anglican. “Part III: THE ANGLICAN CHURCH” is a walk through the major traditions of the Anglican Church. “Part IV: ANGLICAN HELP DESK” should be thought of as the reference desk at the library. Information on church history, a glossary of terms, and topics often talked about by Anglicans may be found in this section. This book may be found on Amazon.com, and don’t forget to support St Mark’s by purchasing through *smile.Amazon.com* and choosing St Mark’s Anglican Church as your designated charity.

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## ***Upcoming Holy Days***

August/September/October/November Holy Days

August 6 – Feast of the Transfiguration: *cancelled*

August 24 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St Bartholomew the Apostle

September 21 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

October 18 (noon) – Feast of St Luke the Evangelist

October 28 (noon) – Feast of St Simon and St Jude, Apostles

November 1 (noon) – Feast of All Saints (obligation)

November 28 (10:00 a.m.) – Thanksgiving Day

November 30 (10:00) – Feast of St Andrew the Apostle

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