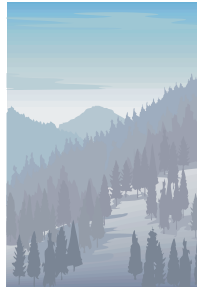


St. Mark's Epistle

April 2009

View from the Mountain...

Garrison Keillor tells the story of his uncle, who at annual family gatherings during Holy Week, would read the story of the passion and death of Jesus. At each year, when he came to the verses describing Jesus' betrayal, he would burst into tears. The family would sit awkwardly until the man was able to continue the reading. Keillor commented that his uncle took the death of his Lord "so personally." Keillor would then pause in his story, and add: "The rest of the church had gotten over that years ago."



Christian history is riddled with failures, shame and all the negative attributes that are manifested in the human situation. Betrayal, a breaking or violation of trust, has always been part of the human condition, to which the Bible gives witness, including the experience of Jesus. The biblical record mirrors our own personal experience where we use freedom in destructive ways contrary to the spirit of God.

Judas remains the most infamous figure of betrayal in the Bible. The name Judas, before Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, was a favorite name for first century Jewish boys and means "praise to God," This respectable name, however, became synonymous with disgrace and treachery. We don't typically name our babies Judas now will you find any churches named St. Judas Iscariot. I believe Judas wasn't after money or that Judas was destined to betray our Lord. I think Judas envisioned Jesus as a revolutionary who would lead an uprising against the Roman government. I suspect his actions were a very misguided attempt to force Jesus to resist and call for a revolt. Judas's attempt to manipulate Jesus, however, failed miserably when he witnessed Jesus become the suffering servant who stood against the power of evil through vulnerable love and goodness.

In the same Passion story we have the betrayal of Jesus by Peter, in his three-fold denial of Jesus at the time of the trial. I suspect that while Peter stood in the courtyard fear overshadowed him and self-preservation took hold, so that he betrayed the most important relationship of his life. All, three of the synoptic gospels tell us that when Peter realized what he'd done he broke down and wept bitterly.

These two stories stand side by side in the gospels as signs for us of not only our human condition but also of the power of repentance and forgiveness to transform our lives. The great tragedy of Judas' story is that instead of making his way to the foot of the cross and being part of the great pardon from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing," took his own life. Peter, on the other hand, hung his head and was filled with great remorse and kept open the possibility for mercy to break in. Peter responded to the possibility of forgiveness by moving toward Jesus rather than away from him. Jesus led Peter very tenderly to accept the truth about himself. As one biblical teacher said, *"It is crucial for us to acknowledge our weaknesses, take responsibility for our sins, and confess them honestly without blaming others. Only then can we learn from our mistakes and turn to a hopeful future...If we shift our focus from our own achievements or failures to the powerful grace of God, then the kind of transformation that took place in Simon Peter is possible for every one of us."* (John Claypool, *The First to Follow*, p.33-34.) Peter picked up the pieces of his life and grace glued him back together. By way of confession and forgiveness, Peter moved from despair to joyful hope; from the grave to resurrection.

Ellen+

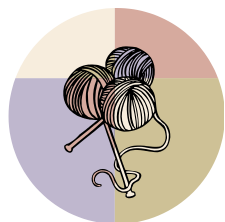
Easter Memorials...

Donations are being accepted for Easter Memorials until Wednesday, April 8th (last and final date if you want to have your donation in the published listing). Please clearly write your name and the person(s) for whom the donation is given in memory or honor, and send them to:

St. Mark's Church
PO Box 191
Adams, MA 01220

You may also place your envelope in the alms basin the Sunday before Easter, or drop it off at the Parish Office before April 8th.

Knit 'n Stitch...



The *Knit 'n Stitch* group has been very busy. We sent 6 sweaters to Guideposts; 7 scarves and 9 hats to the Men at Sea program; 5 throws, 3 of which went to the Veterans in Walter Reed Hospital and 1 shawl. A big

thank you to Jane and Helen for their generous donation to help with the cost the mailing. I would also like to thank all the folks who have so generously donated yarn for our many projects.

All are welcome to join the *Knit 'n Stitch* group on Mondays from 2 to 4 P.M. We open with prayer and a short Bible story before getting on with our knitting or crocheting. God has blessed each one of us by giving us this talent to do good works for others. The fellowship at our meeting proves how God is working among us.

~Barbara Fiske

Good News!

We rejoice with the Diocese of Long Island in the election of the Rev. Lawrence Provenzano as their Bishop Coadjutor on the second ballot. Praise God for the working of the Holy Spirit! We remember the Rev. Provenzano when he was Rector of St. John's Church, North Adams and as Rector of St. Andrews, Longmeadow.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church Holy Week & Easter Sunday Service Schedule

April 5: Palm/Passion Sunday 9:00 am
April 9: Maundy Thursday 7:00 pm
April 10: Good Friday 12 noon & 7:00 pm
April 12: Easter! 9:00 am
Come! Celebrate the Risen Christ.

Coming Events...

April 11: Children's Easter Egg Hunt 3 - 5 pm

Open to the children of our parish. There will be a movie and refreshments along w/the traditional egg hunt. The signup sheet for this event is on the table in the narthex of our church. If you would like additional information, please contact Jo Ann Delisle at 743-2953 or via e-mail at: amajoa@verizon.net

