

St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church

2368 Eggert Road
Tonawanda, NY 14150
831-1777

Fr. Molison's Sermon
"Be ye doers of the Word..."
James 1:22-24

Proper 18 Pentecost 14 Labor Day Weekend September 5-6, 2009

Good Morning!

Ah, Labor Day Weekend, the last hurrah holiday weekend of the summer. The weather has been warm and sunny. It is good to see so many of you here this morning. Ah, you're broke, too.

Labor Day – first celebrated on September 5, 1882 to celebrate the strength and esprit de corps of the trade and labor organization. Working conditions for the laborer then were far different than what we enjoy today.

For instance: During the middle 1800's there was a popular set of rules for the office that showed up in one form or another across the nation. They all resembled something like these which were posted in Zachary Geiger's establishment:

1. Office employees will daily sweep the floors, dust the furniture, and showcases. Each day they must fill lamps, clean chimneys, & turn wicks
2. Windows must be washed once a week.
3. Each clerk will bring in a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's business.
4. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle your nibs to your individual taste.
5. This office will open at 7:00 am and close at 9:00 p.m. daily, except on Sunday, on which day it will remain closed. Each employee is expected to spend Sunday by attending church and contributing liberally to the cause of the Lord.
6. Men employees will be given an evening off each week for courting purposes, or 2 evenings a week if they go regularly to church.
7. After an employee has spent 13 hours of labor in the office, he should spend the rest of his time reading the Bible any other good books while contemplating the glories and building up of the kingdom.
8. Every employee should lay aside, from each pay, a goodly sum of his

earning, so that he will not become a burden upon the charity of his betters.

9. The employee who has performed his labors faithfully and without fault for a period of 5 years in my service, and who had been thrifty and attentive to his religious duties, is looked upon by his fellowmen as a substantial and law-abiding citizen, will be given an increase of 5 cents per day in his pay providing a just return in profits from the business permits it.

Even in these difficult and troublesome economic times, I can't help but wonder how many would apply for a position in Zachary Geiger's establishment. Did you note the spiritual expectations as well as employment expectations? I don't believe Geiger would be successful today in setting the spiritual expectations as a prerequisite for employment.

This weekend also marks the beginning of the new academic year, about which Microsoft's Bill Gates has some very interesting and thought provoking words of wisdom. In his book, *Business @ The Speed of Thought*, he lays out 11 rules students do not learn in high school or college, but should. He argues that our feel-good, politically correct teachings have created a generation of kids with no concept of reality and who are set up for failure in the real world.

RULE 1 - Life is not fair; get used to it.

RULE 2 - The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

RULE 3 - You will NOT make 40 thousand dollars a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice-president with a car phone, until you earn both a high school and college degree.

RULE 4 - If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure.

RULE 5- Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger-flipping; they called it opportunity.

RULE 6 - If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes; learn from them.

RULE 7 - Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills; cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parents' generation, try "delousing" the clothes in your own room.

RULE 8 - Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades; they will let you try as many times as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to ANYTHING in real life.

RULE 9 - Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.

RULE 10 - Television is NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop to go to their jobs.

RULE 11 - Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one. So writes Bill Gates...

Now to the Word...

St. James, from whose writing is our New Testament lesson for this morning, was a half brother to Jesus. James was one of the select few Jesus appeared to after His resurrection. James - whom Paul called a pillar of the Church. James - whom Paul sought out when In Jerusalem. James - who was a leader in the all important Council of Jerusalem. With these credentials, I firmly believe that we ought to take quite seriously what James writes.

I invite you to turn into a pew bible to page 1208, to the left hand column, and to verse 21. In all reality, this verse and the others following, very well answers the question, "What is a teachable spirit?" I invite you to read verse 21 with me.

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

To put away all filthiness means to strip oneself of all vices and all defilement. The Greek term used here has a root also referring to wax in the ears. James is stating that we are to get rid of everything that blocks hearing the Word of God.

To receive with meekness the *implanted* Word. Implanted - the Word of God is already within us. This verse refers back to the prophet Jeremiah's writing in chapter 31, verse 33: "*But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*" The Word is implanted into our hearts. It is already there. We intrinsically know what is right and what is wrong.

Then James addresses in verse 22 the question of the practice of faith. I invite you to read verse 22 with me:

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

The language here is quite straight forward. There is no mincing of meaning here. There is no spin in understanding what James is stating: What is heard read in church is to be acted out; to be put into practice.

Just listening to God's Word does not make one a Christian. Church attendance and Bible reading only takes us less than half way to being a Christian. The real important thing is converting, turning that which we have heard into action.

Rabbinic writing in what is called the Mishnah (Aboth 5:14) characterizes people as:

“Those who hear the law and do not keep it;
Those who do the law without hearing it;
The pious person who does both;
And the ungodly person who does neither.”

I invite you to read verses 23 with me:

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

... like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

I wish to share with you a few things about a mirror. Eric Ferguson wrote an interesting piece about getting up in the morning. “What’s the first thing you do when you get up in the morning?” he asks.

Whatever it is, it’s probably the same thing every day. Everybody seems to have their own morning rituals to get them going. Maybe you have a cup of coffee before you can do anything. Maybe you make your bed as soon as you get out of it, or jump right into the shower.

Some of you may start getting yourself ready for morning the night before, such as setting up the coffee maker. But at some part of everyone’s morning ritual is that of coming face to face with the mirror.

Most of us probably get our first look at ourselves while we are still pretty scary looking. Our eyes have that bleary, dazed look. Our hair is sticking out in strange places. Normally clean-shaven guys have some scruffy overnight growth of beards to deal with.

Facing mirrors first thing in the morning is NOT that pleasant an experience. Mirrors are very honest little things. They do not compromise. They do not gloss over our defects and tell us we are better looking than we really are.

So, why do we have mirrors in our bathrooms? Because, as unpleasant as it may be to confront our own faces first thing in the morning, if we don’t take a look at ourselves and make some *major* adjustments, the rest of the world is going to see that morning face! So, it is better to “face” the truth and make the changes we think are necessary to make ourselves presentable to the rest of the world.

“Mirror, mirror on the wall...” Where does that saying come from? (Snow White) The wicked witch sure did like the mirror’s response that she was the fairest of all. But when the mirror told her that she wasn’t, then she became very angry. You see, that’s the thing about good mirrors, they always tell the truth, even if we don’t like what we see. Mirrors let us know the real self or person we are.

Back to verse 23:

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

“natural face” could that be the morning face I shared about earlier? The one prior to receiving major adjustments?

Verse 24:

24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

James compares the non-doer of the Word with many that just glance at a mirror, say to themselves, “OK,” and move on in life without a second thought. This person omits caring and does nothing about how one looks.

The true Word of God reveals that which one is, as well as that which one ought to be. Man sees in a mirror what needs fixing. He sees what must be done to put it right. But, if he is only a hearer, then he remains just as he is, and all his hearing of the Word has gone for nothing. William Barclay wrote in his commentary on the letter of James, “James is sharing with us that what is heard in the holy place must be lived in the market place, or there is no point in hearing at all.”

Why are you here this morning? To worship God? Yes. To be fed the body and blood of Christ? Yes. To hear the Word of God read and proclaimed? Yes. And given all this, the expectation of God is that what you received here is taken out into the world, making disciples for Christ.

I invite you to read verse 25 with me:

*25 But one who looks (**looks how?**) intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and **abides** by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*

We are to look into God’s word with the same intensity that we look into our morning mirror.

God’s law – is perfect; it cannot be improved. God’s law is perfect, and contrary to what is being preached elsewhere, it cannot be bettered.

God's law is one of liberty, liberty from the penalties of sin. All the great men have agreed that it is only in obeying the law of God that a man becomes truly free. It is in the acceptance of God's will that a man becomes really free.

St. Luke wrote in 11:28: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Be an effectual doer of God's Word, that is, be one whose actions bear fruit, and you will be blessed in what you do.

In these very troubled times, this is a very timely message from the half-brother of Jesus. I trust that you will take home with you what has been read to you this day. Ponder it. Study it. Then pray to the Father through His Son what you can do to put His Word into action. You may be surprised by what may be placed before you. And, if you pay attention to the up coming announcements and read "Parish Life," you just may find a thing or two that you can do! We aim to please...