

# THE LION

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## *Message from the Rector*

*“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures...”*

St Matthew 22:19

I remember it as if it was yesterday. I had just finished a semester studying our Lord’s *Sermon on the Mount*, which means that I had just spent a little over three months studying just three short chapters of the Bible. Knowing that, Fr. Richard Smith asked if I would mind leading a Lenten Bible study that highlighted some of the points drawn out in the course. Newly coming from a church tradition that emphasizes study of the Bible, I looked forward to studying our Lord’s sermon with my new church family.

That is, until the first night we met. When I asked the members of the group to open their Bibles to our Lord’s *Sermon on the Mount*, virtually everyone at the table had to scrounge through the bookshelves in our parish hall to find one. Clue No. 1: no one brought his or her own Bible to a church Bible study. When they finally did find Bibles and settle back into their seats, no one seemed to know exactly where our Lord’s *Sermon on the Mount* was to be found. Some began flipping through the pages, front to back, to see if by chance the words *Sermon on the Mount* might stick out for them. Others went to the Table of Contents to see if they might be able to find it there. When I mentioned that our Lord’s sermon could be found near the beginning of St Matthew’s Gospel, thumbs still flipped through the pages and eyes still went to the table of contents. A couple of people never bothered: “What page is it on?” they asked, as if the Bible has the same common pagination scheme as the *Book of Common Prayer*. Clue No. 2: these folks weren’t even remotely familiar with the Bible.

What struck me most, though, is that virtually everyone sitting around that table had been an Episcopalian more or less all their lives. And with the exception of Sheila, all of them were old enough to be my parents, if not my grandparents. Clue No. 3: evidently most Episcopalians/Anglicans *in particular* aren’t very well versed in the Bible. From that point forward, I knew that studying Biblical texts was going to have to be at the core of both the teaching and preaching ministries of our church. And from that point forward it has.

This little incident highlights an interesting phenomenon that I have noticed over the years, especially in churches like ours (i.e., churches that find their roots in one of the old Mainline denominations), and it is the phenomenon that I call “Bible-phobia” or, perhaps more accurately, a simple lack of knowledge of the text itself. It is as if the Bible, *the* primary text of the Christian religion, has never been emphasized and/or taught.

Certainly the biblical text is central to our liturgical tradition. As a matter of fact, depending on which Sunday morning one attends, one will hear either two or four lessons read from the Bible. And yet, many of us couldn’t find the Epistle of St James or the Book of the Prophet Jonah if our lives depended on it, not to mention be able to discuss what those writings are really all about. As I have often remarked, the Bible is arguably the most owned book, and least read, book in the United States – even by Christians, especially those of us who are heirs to the old mainline churches in the liturgical tradition.

And why, we must ask, is that the case, especially when we traditional Episcopalians have such a rich tradition of Morning and Evening Prayer that in itself, if practiced regularly, would take us through the Bible, cover to cover, in the course of a year? Well, I can think of several reasons.

Perhaps those of us who were raised in the liturgical tradition of the Church are used to having the lessons

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read to us and (hopefully) explained to us, so we simply aren't used to "digging in" to the Bible for ourselves. Or maybe the study and/or devotional reading of scriptures just hasn't been emphasized in our churches. Or perhaps the Bible has always been viewed as primarily the domain of the clergy, and if Ol' Fr Windbag wants me to know about it he will tell me. Or it may be that we don't want to be viewed as the stereotypical Christian fundamentalist who is always quoting what the Bible says about this, that, or the other thing.

Who knows? But the fact of the matter is, God has given his holy word to his people, and he expects us to know it, and learn it, and apply it in our lives. So from that standpoint, the Bible is our "Christian owner's manual," so to speak. And like any other owner's manual, we should all be familiar with it. And the only way to be familiar with it is to read it *daily*.

But there is another reason that we should all be picking up our Bibles daily, and this reason has less to do with our being familiar with the content of scripture than it does with us being familiar with the One who has given it to us. According to many ancient Christian writers, especially those whom the Church has identified as the "Desert Fathers" and "Desert Mothers" of our faith, there is an almost sacramental nature to the Bible, meaning that in its words of scripture that we both meet our Lord and hear him speaking to us there. In other words, in their view to hold the Bible in one's hand is to hold Jesus Christ himself, and to read the words that are written there is to sacramentally hear his voice. As a matter of fact, this relationship with our Lord *in* his word is so important that St Jerome, that cantankerous old fourth century Bible translator, could say, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." That is how closely our Lord is related to his written word.

And yet this problem of "Bible-phobia" continues to exist. Many of us still remain virtually unversed in the words of holy writ.

But one thing is for certain: this is also one of the simplest of deficiencies to overcome. All we have to do is pick up a Bible, *in a translation that we can easily read and understand*, and simply begin to read. We don't need a complicated reading plan, we don't need any scholarly Bible aids or study guides or anything like that (all that can come later), all we have to do is pick up a Bible and read. Read the lessons for each the day from Morning and Evening Prayer, read the propers for the Sunday morning Eucharist, develop a reading plan of your own (a chapter a day, a book a month, through the entire Bible in a year): whatever it takes for us to read at least some portion of our Bibles each and every day is all that we need to do.

But we must pick up our Bibles and read. We must meet our Lord there each and every day. He is waiting for us in the pages of scripture, just as he has been for the past two-thousand years. All we have to do is pick up our Bibles to meet him there. Ignorance of Scripture *is* ignorance of Christ. May we never neglect to meet our Lord in the pages of his holy word. And as we meet him there, may the blessing of his peace rest upon us forever. Amen.

## Postscriptum

**Tolle lege, Take Up and Read**

I am often asked to recommend a Bible translation when people decide to dedicate themselves to the daily reading of scripture, and frankly that is a somewhat difficult question to answer. Outside of learning Hebrew and Greek in order to read the scriptures in their original languages, every translation has its strengths and weakness. For instance, the Authorized or King James Version is a very beautifully written version, lending itself to liturgical and devotional reading and, at the same time, making Bible memorization somewhat easier since the text carries in it poetic cadences, but it can also be a rather difficult text to understand. We don't speak in "Elizabethan English" anymore, and some words have changed meanings over the centuries. Nevertheless, this version is the most beloved version of the Bible in the English speaking world, and I highly recommend it for devotional reading.

The New International Version is the most popular version written in vernacular English. However, it too has its limitations. While simple to understand, it doesn't carry the same beauty of phrasing as the Authorized Version, and like all translations it can be hindered by changing English idioms. Nevertheless, it will certainly make some passages simpler to understand.

*Message from the Rector - Continued*

The New American Standard is perhaps the most literal English translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts, this making it one of the best choices for serious study. But because it is a "formal equivalence" translation, the English can also sound somewhat "wooden." It remains, nevertheless, a very popular translation for biblical study.

The Revised Standard Version, as well as both of its modern updates, the New Revised Standard and English Standard Version, are also popular translations. All three will certainly convey the meaning of the text, although all three also aren't without their limitations. Of the three I prefer the original - the Revised Standard Version - since it retains some of the linguistic flavor of the old Authorized Version, keeping the text and cadences familiar. It is, though, becoming harder and harder to find since the other two have superseded it.

There are many other translations as well: the New King James Version, the New Living Translation, the God's Word, etc. None of them are perfect, nor are any of them beyond use. All will more or less convey both the meaning of the text and our general responsibility to both God and neighbor. So what do I tell people when they ask what Bible translation they should use? My only answer is, "Whichever one you will read." That is what is important: Tolle lege; take up and read!

*Music Notes*

Kathleen Knott, Music Director/Organist

## Two Thanksgiving Hymns

"Now Thank We All Our God" # 397

"We Plow the Fields, and Scatter" # 291

In 1636, Martin Rinkart wrote the German text of "Nun danket alle Gott." Rinkart lived in the fortified city of Eilenburg, Saxony during the Thirty Years' War. The city became a refuge for victims of the war and was beset with overcrowding, famine and pestilence. During the worst part of the plague, Rinkart conducted up to 50 funerals a day as the only surviving minister in Eilenburg.

The text is sung to the tune by Johann Cruger which he composed in 1647. Felix Mendelssohn wrote the harmony that we sing today. Catherine Winkworth translated the text into English in the 19th century.

When we note the tribulations of Martin Rinkart, the words become especially meaningful.

Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands, and voices,  
 Who wondrous things hath done, in whom his world rejoices;  
 Who from our mother's arms hath blessed us on our way  
 With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today. Vs. 1

The popular hymn "We plough the fields, and scatter" is associated with the harvest festival and with Thanksgiving in the United States. The text was written by the German poet, Matthias Claudius (1740-1815). The poet left Christianity in his 20's, but returned to the faith after an illness and was inspired to write a number of Christian poems. This poem was eventually published as a peasant song in the 1800s. It was set to the music of Johann Schulz. Eventually Jane Montgomery Campbell translated and adapted the text from the German into English and taught the hymn to the children at a parish school of the Church of England in London. The hymn was later published in the Garland of Songs and Children's Chorale Book.

Thank you to St. Mark's Choir, the children and the handbell ringers who graciously share their talents and time with us in their Music Ministry. We welcome Jay Philpott to the tenor section of the choir.

## *Florida Veggies*

### Dan and Lisa Brenneman

What's For Dinner?

VEGGIES! Florida Veggies, that is! Florida Veggies & More is a mission farm teaching a hand-up and not a hand-out! A main project of the farm is to provide an agricultural training program for homeless and near-homeless persons. Students learn how to farm in newer methods like hydroponics and aquaponics. 75% of the harvest is donated to local organizations such as Gifford's Father's Table, ARC, and Samaritan Center. 25% of the harvest is sold at the onsite farm store and at the local Beaches Farmers' Market. There are no salaries – all proceeds go directly to the farm mission. The farm operates from the generosity of volunteers.

If you are looking for a way to put your time and talents to work, consider a job on the farm!

#### **Volunteer opportunities include:**

- Store worker to greet guests and help with sales – Mon through Fri – 9-6,
- Farm Work! Assist in harvesting veggies and packing for the store and the Saturday market,
- Mentor ARC students in their medicinal edible garden on Wed at 10AM,
- Mentor after school with at-risk middle school students on Thursday at 3:30PM,
- Drive donations to drop off locations on Tues, 9AM.

Want some veggies for dinner, as well as pork and beef? Join the COOP – a weekly harvest bag of fresh veggies!

Thank you for your support! Please contact us at 772-559-5641

## *Upcoming Holy Days*

### October/November/December Holy Days

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

November 24 (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 and Midnight Mass (*with incense*)

December 25 (10:00 a.m.) – Christmas Day

December 26 (noon) – Feast of St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

December 27 (noon) – Feast of St John, Apostle and Evangelist

December 28 (noon) – Feast of the Holy Innocents

## **St. Mark's Anglican Church**

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**Rector**

**Rev. Randall S. Russell**

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