

Trinity Times

A newsletter for the members and friends of Trinity Episcopal Church

Trinity Episcopal Church
The Episcopal Church in Athens since 1842
703 South Main Street (office at 701) Athens, PA 18810
The Rev. Benjamin Lee Lentz, Long - Term Supply Priest

Office: Voice and Fax: 570-888-5715
Parish Administrator, Barbara Cameron Caum: 570-888-8981
Web Site: www.trinityathens.org - information@trinityathens.org
[Facebook.com/Trinity.Episcopal.Church.Athens](https://www.facebook.com/Trinity.Episcopal.Church.Athens)

Pentecost Season - September, 2023

Editor's Note: This column was first published in September, 2020. Unfortunately, it is even more relevant today. Always grateful for Fr. Ben's scholarship and insights into the scriptures, I commend this essay to you for reading and meditation.

White Privilege & Jesus

Reflection on Matthew 15:10-28
The Rev. Benjamin Lee Lentz

A man walks up to a doctor and asks for his help. The doctor takes a quick look at the man and realizes that his skin color is different, that the man's accent is not like his own. His response: "Sorry buddy but I don't have time for you. I'm a very busy man. Go away."

That wasn't a joke and I'm sure that if this story was set in the 40's or 50's and especially in the deep South, we'd have no problem seeing it as a very real possibility. Right? It would have been reluctantly dismissed as part of a cultural ethos.

I remember, while travelling to Florida with my parents in the late 50's, seeing signs on restroom doors "Whites Only" or "No Coloreds", even on the doors of the restaurants. I remember shopping in Paterson, NJ in the 60's and having retail clerks skip over a black person to wait on me first, a teenager! No signs on the doors, but the privilege was clearly understood.

Some people witnessing such an event at such a time and place might be appalled, but many would have understood these situations. Seriously, society said it was okay because that's the way America was.

In our day and age, I hope this story is repugnant to us as Americans.

But wait a minute. Isn't this a modern day version of the Gospel passage?

Jesus is travelling in a foreign territory - Tyre and Sidon to be specific - roughly the area of Lebanon. An alien woman - well, not really alien because Jesus is technically in her home territory - a woman

comes to Jesus and asks for his help. She might not have been so bold if it was something trivial, like food or water, or even help for herself, but when it comes to one's child's life, conventionality goes out the window.

She is bold. He ignores her. But her child is involved so she persists - annoyingly so. The situation isn't going to go away quietly.

Jesus responds to her: "Look lady, you're not really part of my agenda. I'm here preaching to Jews who have lost their way and moved into this foreign land."

What's going on? Is Jesus saying that the societal norm of racism is okay? Is this the human aspect of Jesus? Is this representative of the "fallen nature" of Adam?

Jesus was indeed a part of a society which said that certain people were unclean: lepers, tax collectors, prostitutes, Samaritans, Canaanites (by the way, Canaanite was a code word for basically any non-Jew living in the area). Association with these people could pollute the Jew, making them ritualistically impure.

What's going on? I know we can try to dance around this and say that Jesus was just testing her faith, but that's not what the story really says. "Lady, you're not welcome at this counter in this restaurant. I'm the messiah for the Jews. I'm not your messiah."

Perhaps there's another perspective. I choose to see this as yet another temptation of Jesus.

God forces Jesus' hand through the insistence of the woman. Jesus must make a decision (like in the wilderness temptations after his baptism by John). Will he be part of the status quo looking to the outer person (a Canaanite) or will he be like God, looking to the person's heart?

Just as in the wilderness when tempted by the devil - tempted by social norms - Jesus takes the divine

path. Jesus breaks the accepted religious/social norm. It isn't okay to shun selected groups.

Perhaps this story does indeed lift up Jesus' human side - not a fallen nature, but an illustration of what humanity can be. Jesus gives humanity - Jesus gives us - Jesus gives you and me - the authority to allow the divine to rule our life and surpass the norms of society.

There is no denying that we live in a political climate that has used dehumanization as a tactic - refugees are "animals," Mexican migrants are "rapists," Muslims are threats, Blacks are rioters and opportunists, birtherism. It is used as a political tool. And there is no denying that hateful political rhetoric gives permission for prejudice and the accompanying 'white privilege'.

David Livingstone Smith, a Professor of Philosophy at the University of New England in Biddeford, Maine says: "It [dehumanization] acts as a psychological lubricant dissolving our inhibitions and inflaming destructive passions. As such, it empowers us to perform acts that would, under normal circumstances, be unthinkable."

Words are powerful.

In college I had a friend who had been the troop sharpshooter - the sniper - in Vietnam. He always referred to Asians as "gooks", a term I repeatedly told him I found offensive.

"Bob," I said, "they are people, not gooks." His response was that he had to see them as gooks because if he saw them as people he couldn't live with himself or his actions.

If great words can heal and inspire, base words can corrupt. Politicians, under the influence and seduction in the guise of conservatism, have been delivering the poison of prejudice in small but increasing doses. In Charlottesville, the scales tipped, the effect became fully evident. Foolishly, it was declared there were some very fine people on both sides!

White supremacy - also known as white nationalism, a fake term to disguise their true agenda - is heinous, despicable and has no place in the life of a Christian.

"...it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles...what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles." [Mt. 15:10, 18]

Jesus' final action in the Gospel story declares an inclusiveness that sets aside societal norms. If we are to be faithful to our baptismal covenant, we must proclaim a gospel of inclusivity. We must stress, as Jesus did after his baptism, God's love for all of his children.

We cannot pigeon-hole people for the sake of expediency or laziness. All are children of God, made in God's image, and we must look beyond their situation or condition and look to their heart.

We must be faithful to this Gospel message in our daily life. We must examine our life carefully, checking our thoughts and words for prejudice and biases. And yes, we must acknowledge the reality of white privilege.

We must go beyond the accepted norm: don't tell or listen to ethnic jokes; be careful not to prejudge people on appearances; don't categorize or group people together based on their race or religion.

Choose the divine path.

Garrison Keillor on Episcopalians

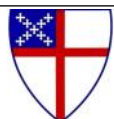
We make fun of Episcopalians for their blandness, their excessive calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed and also for their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like them.

If you were to ask an audience in Des Moines, a relatively Episcopalianless place, to sing along on the chorus of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," they will look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Episcopalians, they'd smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach!And down the road!

Many Episcopalians are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony, a talent that comes from sitting on the lap of someone singing alto or tenor or bass and hearing the harmonic intervals by putting your little head against that person's rib cage. It's natural for Episcopalians to sing in harmony. We are too modest to be soloists, too worldly to sing in unison.

When you're singing in the key of C and you slide into the A7th and D7th chords, all two hundred of you, it's an emotionally fulfilling moment. By our joining in harmony, we somehow promise that we will not forsake each other.

Cont'd on p. 4



Trinity Episcopal Church - September 2023

Pentecost

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p><i>Trinity Cycle of Prayer:</i> 9/3 Josie Thomas, Mary Smith. 9/10 Kathy Patterson, Alexandra, and Jonathan Ayres 9/17 Ralph, Bonnie, Rose, Jeffrey, Chris, and Justin Bailey. 9/24 David, Chela, Brandon, and Sean Bubniak.</p>		 <p><i>Diocese of Bethlehem:</i> 9/3 St. Mark's, New Milford. 9/10 St. John's, Palmerton; the Constitution and Canons Committee. 9/17 St. Joseph's, Pen Argyl and St. Mary's, Wind Gap, The Rev. Jane Gaeta. 9/25 Trinity, Pottsville, The Rev. Timothy Albright; The Diocesan Convention.</p>		1	2	
<p>3 Pentecost 14 P-17 10:00 Holy Eucharist II 11:00 Coffee Hour</p> <p><i>Alan Caum</i></p>	<p>4 Labor Day AA 7 and 8:00 pm</p>	5	<p>6 AA Intergroup 5 pm AA 7:30 pm</p>	<p>7 AA 7 pm</p>	8	9
<p>10 Pentecost 15 P-18 10:00 Holy Eucharist II 11:00 Coffee Hour</p>	<p>11 AA 7 and 8:00 pm</p>	12	<p>13 AA 7:30 pm</p>	<p>14 Holy Cross Day AA 7 pm</p>	<p>15</p> <p><i>Jon Murray Paige Bubniak</i></p>	16
<p>17 Pentecost 16 P-19 10:00 Holy Eucharist II 11:00 Coffee Hour</p> <p><i>Kim Cornell Tom Maneval</i></p>	<p>18 AA 7 and 8:00 pm</p>	19	<p>20 AA 7:30 pm</p>	<p>21 St. Matthew AA 7 pm</p> <p><i>McKenzie Elliott Caden Hollywood</i></p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p> <p><i>Fall Begins</i></p> 
<p>24 Pentecost 17 P-20 10:00 Holy Eucharist II 11:00 Coffee Hour **Vestry Meets**</p>	<p>25 AA 7 and 8:00 pm</p>	<p>26</p> <p><i>Patricia Gurney</i></p>	<p>27 AA 7:30 pm</p>	<p>28 AA 7 pm</p> <p><i>Shelly Strange Fish</i></p>	<p>29 St. Michael and All Angels</p> <p><i>Helen McNeal</i></p>	30
 <p><i>Kajo Keji:</i> 9/3 Emmanuel Parish Lubule. 9/10 St. Paul Bori Parish. 9/17 St. Mark Merguga Parish. 9/24 Lorudung Parish and Liwolo-Helen Wagner Primary School.</p>		<p><i>Anglican Communion:</i> 9/3 The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean, Archbishop James Richard Wong Yin Song. 9/10 The Church of Ireland, Archbishop John McDowell. 9/17 The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean, Archbishop James Richard Wong Yin Song. 9/25 The Church of Ireland, Archbishop John McDowell.</p>			<p>152nd Diocesan Convention October 13-14 Centennial Conference Center, Center Valley, Pennsylvania</p>	<p>UTO Ingathering October 8</p> 

September at Trinity

Sundays at 10 a.m. - Holy Eucharist II and Sermon

Vestry meets September 24 following worship.

Cont'd from p. 4

I do believe this, people: Episcopalians, who love to sing in four-part harmony are the sort of people you could call up when you're in deep distress. If you are dying, they will comfort you. If you are lonely, they'll talk to you. And if you are hungry, they'll give you tuna salad!

Episcopalians believe in prayer, but would practically die if asked to pray out loud. Episcopalians like to sing, except when confronted with a new hymn or a hymn with more than four stanzas. Episcopalians believe their Rectors will visit them in the hospital, even if they don't notify them that they are there. Episcopalians usually follow the official liturgy and will feel it is their way of suffering for their sins. Episcopalians believe in miracles and even expect miracles, especially during their stewardship visitation programs or when passing the plate.

Episcopalians feel that applauding for their children's choirs will not make the kids too proud and conceited. Episcopalians think that the Bible forbids them from crossing the aisle while passing the peace. Episcopalians drink coffee as if it were the Third Sacrament. Episcopalians feel guilty for not staying to clean up after their own wedding reception in the Fellowship Hall. Episcopalians are willing to pay up

to one dollar for a meal at church. Episcopalians still serve Jell-O in the proper liturgical color of the season and Episcopalians believe that it is OK to poke fun at themselves and never take themselves too seriously.

And finally, you know you are a Episcopalian when:

- It's 100 degrees, with 90% humidity, and you still have coffee after the service.
- You hear something really funny during the sermon and smile as loudly as you can.
- Donuts are a line item in the church budget, just like coffee.
- When you watch a Star Wars movie and they say, "May the Force be with you," and you respond, "and also with you."
- And lastly, it takes ten minutes to say good-bye . . .

(NOTE: Garrison Keillor attends St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in St. Paul, Minnesota)



Do you have a UTO Box? Our Ingathering will be **October 8**. The **152nd Diocesan Convention** is October 13-14 at Centennial Conference Center, Center Valley, Pennsylvania. Our delegate is **Loyd Moreno**. Pre-convention Zoom meetings have not been announced but are expected to be the first week of October. To learn more about convention, visit [Diocesan Convention | The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem \(diobeth.org\)](#) You may want to read more about the possible reunification with the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, an on-going study.

Trinity Episcopal Church
703 S. Main Street
Office: 701 S. Main
Athens, PA 18810



Season of Pentecost
September 2023

To seek and serve Christ in all people