

THE SENTINEL



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

February 2007

ST. STEPHENS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Father David's Message

WHY DOES JESUS ALWAYS REFUSE REQUESTS?

An often overlooked aspect of the gospel stories is that the good, tender, compassionate Christ always begins by refusing to do what is asked of him. Even when his mother told him that they had no wine, Jesus refuses to act replying, "What is that to you and me?"



John 2: 1-12

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

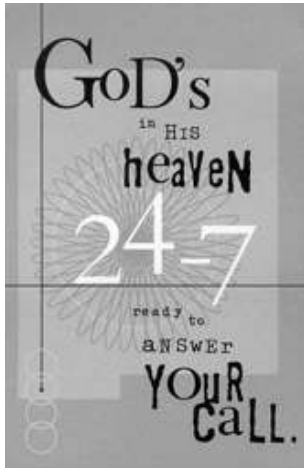
10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

But notice how Mary reacted. She didn't complain or begin to sulk! What she said was: "Do whatever he tells you." She is calm, confident and completely at God's disposal. She had complete confidence, not in the thing she asked for (the wine), but in Jesus, and her request was granted.

Why does Jesus always begin by refusing? The answer is because he wishes to give us more than we are willing to receive and because, as St. Paul tell us, in prayer we do not know what to ask, so the Holy Spirit has to ask for us.



You see, to pray is to place ourselves entirely at God's disposal so that he may, for once, do for us what he always wanted to do. The problem God has is that we never give him the time, the opportunity, or the freedom to bestow his gifts upon us.

Jesus was not, therefore, interested, first and foremost, in supplying extra wine to save an embarrassing situation. He was far more interested in bestowing God's abundant love on the newly-wed. This super-abundant love of God is symbolized by the wine, which is a Biblical symbol of God's life, love, joy, and happiness. It was Mary's faith in her son that allowed God's love to flow so freely.

God has much to say to us, much to do in us and much to give. To pray is an act of faith; it is to believe the God is active and more than willing to bless us. We can make God's action in our lives possible by learning to accept a refusal of our request as God's initiative to opening the door of faith so that HIS love can flow in abundance, as the wine flowed at the wedding at Cana.

Lent - February 21 Thru April 7 2007

Early Christians observed "a season of penitence and fasting" in preparation for the Paschal feast, or Pascha (BCP, pp. 264-265). The season now known as Lent (from an Old English word meaning "spring," the time of lengthening days) has a long history.

Originally, in places where Pascha was celebrated on a Sunday, the Paschal feast followed a fast of up to two days. In the third century this fast was lengthened to six days. Eventually this fast became attached to, or overlapped, another fast of forty days, in imitation of Christ's fasting in the wilderness.

The forty-day fast was especially important for converts to the faith who were preparing for baptism, and for those guilty of notorious sins who were being restored to the Christian assembly. In the western church the forty days of Lent extend from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday, omitting Sundays. The last three days of Lent are the sacred Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

Today Lent has reacquired its significance as the final preparation of adult candidates for baptism. Joining with them, all Christians are invited "to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word" (BCP, p. 265).

But whosoever
drinketh of the
water that I shall
give him shall
never thirst; but
the water that I
shall give him
shall be in him a
well of water
springing up into
everlasting life.

John 4:14

Deadline for the March Sentinel is Sunday February 18, 2007.

Church Directory

The Church directory and birthday list is being updated. If your information is not correct or not included, please notify Diane Lanier at 910-897-5658. Otherwise please complete the membership information sheet that can be found in the Narthex of the Church.

Volunteers Needed

- 1) We need volunteers to assist in the nursery. If you can help please contact Diane Lanier or Peter Strickland.
- 2) Suppliers of the Coffee/fellowship hour are needed each month.
- 3) Lay readers and ushers for all of our services.
- 4) Acolytes for all of our services.

February Birthdays

- | | |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Jacob Phillips |
| 2 | Stephen Pope |
| 4 | Bradeene Vail |
| 7 | Christine Carrano |
| 9 | Susan Horton |
| 14 | Angela Rivera |
| 15 | Lorrie Maynard Roth |
| 17 | Herbert Fabregas |
| 18 | Doug Willard
Bruce Bates |
| 19 | Greg Brooks |
| 22 | Tim Driver |
| 23 | Mary Lou Steinkamp |

February Anniversaries

22 Joe and Kathy Tuttle

Acolyte Training

John Todd will schedule.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ be with you all.**

Romans 16:24

Men's Fellowship

The next meeting will be 6:30 PM Thursday February 15, 2007 at Lloyd's Fellowship. Please sign up if you are attending so there will be enough food. Please pay Mike Wells \$10.00 in advance for the meal.

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming St Stephens Yard Sale. The sale will be held May 5, 2007 on the church grounds. Food and beverages will be available. Announcements will be made as to where and when donated items can be dropped off.

ECW

On January 23rd the ECW group had their meeting. The gathering was a huge success with an overwhelming number of regular and new members present. Look forward to some new and exciting things to come from the group.

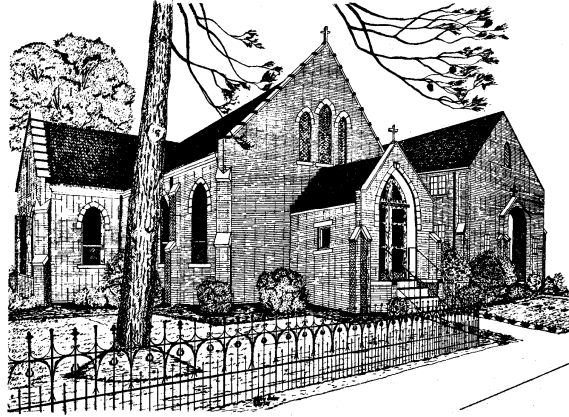
Member ship is open to all women and the group meets bi-monthly. Please join us for our next meeting in March.

ST. STEPHENS EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Our parish is named for Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr. His feast day is celebrated on December 26.

...but Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to Heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said Behold I see the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice...and cast him out of the city, and stoned him—Acts 7:55-58



“To know Christ and make Him Known”



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ST. STEPHENS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Go In Peace To Love And Serve The Lord !