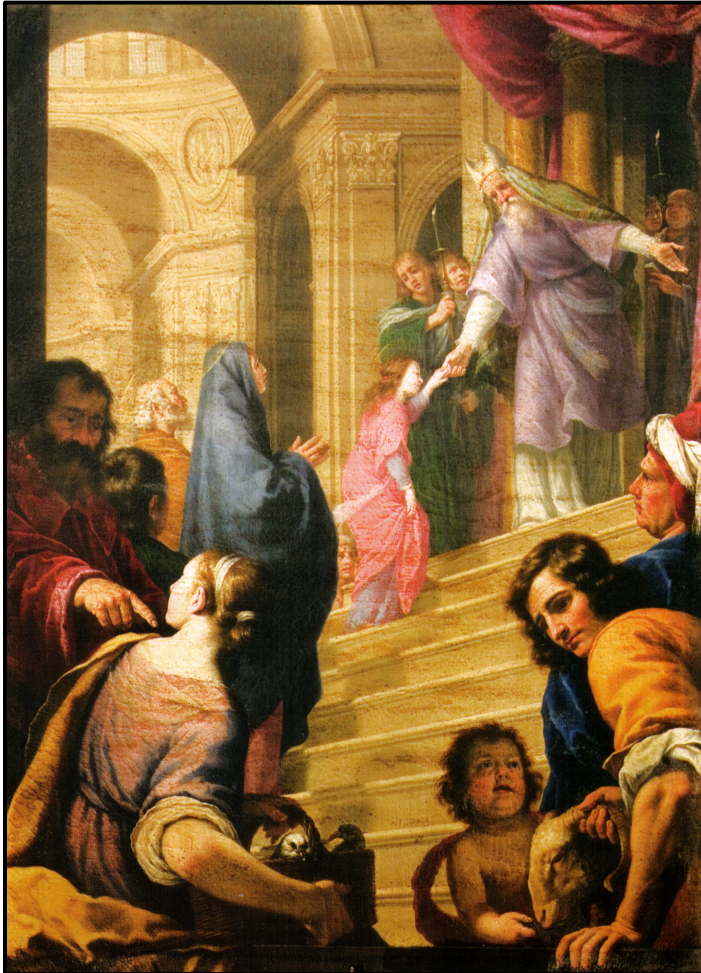


THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
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November 2019

This Month's Cover

Our cover painting, in honor of the Feast of the Presentation of Mary (November 21), is Alfonso Boschi's *The Presentation Mary in the Temple*. It is oil on canvas, and is displayed in San Gaetano (*La Chiesa del Santi Michele e Gaetano*) in Florence. We could not find its measurements. It was completed in the early to mid-17th century, but the precise date is unknown.

The story of the Presentation of Mary is not in the Bible, but is described in detail in the pseudepigraphic *Protoevangelium of Saint James*. While this book as a whole has little theological and historical credibility, the story of the presentation of Mary in the Temple as described in it is a very early and strong Christian tradition. The feast is celebrated on November 21 in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox Churches (where it is known as The Entry of the Most Holy *Theotokos* [God-bearer] into the Temple). Jewish law required that when possible a newborn child was to be presented to God in the Temple. The tradition is that Mary's elderly parents, Saints Joachim and Anne, were childless. They vowed that if given a child they would present him to God. Saint Anne conceived in her old age, and in gratitude they journeyed from Sephoris in Galilee to Jerusalem and presented her in the Temple. The earliest tradition says that it was when she was an infant, but a later tradition says that it was when she was three years old. That tradition is most strongly accepted in the Eastern Church. This painting depicts her as an older child. Another early tradition says that she was presented to be a "Temple Virgin." These were young girls who served in the Temple, one of their main duties being the sewing, embroidery and maintenance of the priests' holy vestments. They were released and sent home to marry when they reached puberty. Depicted in the

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foreground are people coming to the Temple to offer sacrifices. On the right is a shepherd with a ram, accompanied by a young boy (his son or an apprentice). Behind him is a rich man, perhaps the owner of the flock. On the left is a woman with a dove. She and the man speaking to her likely depict Saints Joachim and Anne, Mary's parents. A dove is the prescribed sacrifice when presenting a child to God.

Little is known about the painter, Alfonso Boschi (1615-1649) other than that he was a member of a family of famous painters of the Florentine Baroque era. His father was Fabrizio Boschi, noted for his religious paintings, and his uncle was Matteo Rosselli, who was famous for his depictions of historical events. Alfonso was a student of his older brother Francesco, a portrait artist, who in turn had studied under their father Fabrizio. The Boschi studio in Florence was highly regarded, and produced a number of famous painters.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

This is the time of year when we annually celebrate the pluck of the 17th century English Puritans who fled persecution and came to start over in America. I must admit that I am not fond of classic Puritan thinking. Admittedly, there are some moral and theological standards that simply cannot be compromised. The Puritans, however, were too fiercely stern and judgmental, punishing dissent harshly, and focusing too much on the wrath of God rather than on his love. On the other hand, these days we have gone too far in the other direction. The "Church of Nice," claiming charity and tolerance, is loath to denounce anything. It tolerates the most heinous sins, heresies and corruptions that are clearly condemned not only by the Law and the Prophets, but in the teachings of Jesus himself.

The metaphor of a pendulum swinging from one extreme to another is often used, but I am not sure that in this case it is a very good one. Pendulums come to rest in the center only when they have run out of energy. Morality, on the other hand, seems to thrive best when people have the energy to struggle

to keep it stable, balanced and centered. Mindless judgmentalism—the “zero tolerance” mentality—is easy, because it does not require decision-making. Likewise, amorality—the “anything goes” mentality—is equally easy because it does not require the effort it takes to maintain a moral standard. It takes a lot of work to hold things in balance and to keep them from moving to one extreme or the other. We see the same thing in politics. It is far easier to stand mindlessly at one political extreme or the other than to struggle to understand the other side’s position, hammer out a compromise, and try to meet on central common ground. In theology, morality or politics there does not have to be a single central point of equilibrium. In fact, that would probably be unhealthy. However, there does need to be a central range, whose limits are reasonable to both sides, and which allows for disagreement and civil discussion without anger and vituperation. It takes a lot of energy to maintain that.

As Christians, it is our responsibility to stand up for what we believe, and to attempt to share it—*share* it, not force it down others’ throats, which is an extreme that too many, including the Church, have tried throughout the ages. Our failure to share the Faith for fear of offending takes us to the other extreme, where we are denying others the opportunity to know the truth. Again, I am not at all fond of the teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, but I admire their courage to go door-to-door, risking harsh rejection and worse, in order to share what they believe to be the truth. Souls can be lost if we are too oppressive, but they can also be lost if we are so “nice” that we are afraid to offend anyone. Offending did not seem to worry Jesus when he called the Pharisees hypocrites or cast the money-changers out of the Temple. In either case, we will have to answer for every soul that we could have saved and yet let be lost by our closed-mindedness or our timidity. Let that sink in, and then pray about it. Pray about it a lot, then try to do something about it. It could make a difference in the salvation of a lot of people, including yourself.

Father Rick Losch

Veteran's Day Commemoration

St. James' will honor our veterans at our service on Sunday, November 10th. If you have any veteran you would like remembered in our service on that Sunday, please get the name to Hiram Patrenos no later than Thursday, November 7th.

Hiram Patrenos

Community Thanksgiving Service

St. James' will be hosting the Community Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, November 24th at 6:00 p.m. You are asked to bring canned goods which will be given to the Department of Human Resources for distribution to those in need. Please make your plans to attend and invite your friends and neighbors as we give thanks for the multitude of blessings God has bestowed upon us.

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flower Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers through the rest of the season of Pentecost. A sign-up chart is located in the Sacristy. You may use flowers from your yard or if you wish, make arrangements with a florist to provide them. For more information, please speak with Carolyn Patrenos.

Hiram Patrenos

Wilmer Hall Christmas Contribution

Once again, St. James' will be making a special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs this year. Envelopes are available on the table in the vestibule and contributions should be made payable to St. James' and designated for "Wilmer Hall Christmas." Envelopes may be placed in the Alms Basins or given to Hiram Patrenos. So that we may forward our gift in time for use this Christmas, you are asked to make your contribution no later than Sunday, November 24th.

Hiram Patrenos

When you make a commitment you build hope.

When you keep it you build trust.

Every Member Canvass

St. James' will be conducting its Every Member Canvass during the month of November. The Vestry needs this information so that it can plan appropriately for the upcoming year. If you have any questions regarding our parish finances, please do not hesitate to speak with our Treasurer, Hiram Patrenos. Pledge cards are available on the table in the vestibule. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James', its mission and work.

Hiram Patrenos

Forward Day by Day

The new *Forward Day by Day* daily devotional booklets for November, December, and January are available on the table in the vestibule and in the tract rack in the parish house. They are available in both standard and large print editions.

Hiram Patrenos

Saints' Days on Sunday

From the earliest days of Anglicanism it has been the tradition that with very few exceptions (such as Christmas and All Saints' Day), if a saint's day falls on Sunday, it is translated to another day or, in the case of minor observances, dropped for that year. In recent years the Episcopal Church has started observing some of them on Sunday if that is when they fall in the calendar. I long objected to this, arguing that it demeaned the primary observance of Sunday, which is the Resurrection of Christ. Recently a wise man changed my mind. He pointed out that love is not a "zero-sum" matter. When a man loves his children, that does not reduce the amount of love he has for his wife. In fact, if it changes it at all, it enhances it. The lives and actions of the saints are reflections of the love of Christ, and so to honor them is to honor Christ. From ancient times the Eastern and Roman Churches have observed saints' days on Sunday, so the Episcopal Church is simply returning to a centuries-old practice.

Richard R. Losch+

Be Wordly Wise

Ordinary Time

At the end of this month we will come to the end of the longest season in the Church calendar, which is all the Sundays after Pentecost. This season, the last in the Church year, is also known as Ordinary Time. Many people incorrectly think that it is so called because it is common or routine, thus ordinary. That is not at all the case. The Church calendar is properly called an Ordo Calendar. *Ordo* is Latin for Order in the sense of arrangement or sequence. The word ordinary, which derives from *ordo*, is often used today to mean commonplace, but that was not its original meaning. Originally it was an adjective that meant exercising direct rather than delegated authority. A bishop is an Ordinary Officer of the Church because he is vested with an authority of his own, whereas a priest's authority is granted to him through the authority of the bishop. The word ordain, which is a sacramental function that only a bishop can perform, also comes from the same root.

Each of the first five seasons of the Ordo (Church year) has a specific theme. They are Advent (the penitential preparation for Christmas), Christmas (the celebration of the Nativity of Christ), Epiphany (the observance of the spreading of the Gospel to the world), Lent (the penitential preparation for Easter) and Easter (the celebration the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ). The sixth, the season of the Pentecost and the Sundays after it, or Ordinary Time, has no specific theme. Rather, it focuses on spiritual growth through the observance of the sequence (order) of the many major and minor holy days that commemorate saints and holy events. That is far from ordinary in the common use of that word, and it is a powerful tool to help us put our spiritual lives in order. We should not look on Ordinary Time simply as that seemingly endless period of green vestments, but rather as a time of an exciting sequence of observances of the great events in the ministry of Christ, the lives of the Saints, and the history of Christ's Church.

Richard R. Losch+

John Smith, Pocahontas and Squanto

Captain John Smith was not the bashful “nice guy” that legend portrays him to be. He was not a Puritan, but a mercenary soldier hired by the Puritans to organize the trip and protect them as they started their new settlement in America. He had been to America before, where he had been involved in capturing Indians to be sold as slaves. In 1607 the 11-year-old Powhatan princess Pocahontas saved his life when the tribe had had enough of him and were going to kill him. In 1613 she was captured by early colonists, who converted her to Christianity and renamed her Rebecca. In 1614 Thomas Hunt captured several Indians to be sold as slaves. One of these was Tisquantum, the Pawtuxet chieftain known as Squanto. They were brought to Spain, where they were bought and freed by a group of Franciscans who converted them to Catholicism. Squanto worked four years in an English shipyard, where he became fluent in English before returning to his own people in 1619. When the Puritans landed in 1620 he saved their lives by teaching them how to farm that type of terrain. To the distress of the Puritans, he remained a faithful Roman Catholic to his death.

Richard R. Losch+

More Mayflower Trivia

During a heavy storm the Mayflower almost swamped. John Howland, a servant of John Carver, was washed overboard. As the wave swept him off the deck he grabbed a hal-yard, and the crew hauled him back on board. Although he was a servant, the Carvers respected his loyalty, and having no children, made him their heir. Governor Carver and his wife died in 1621 in the spring following that first harsh winter in Plymouth, and Howland inherited their fortune. In spite of his brush with death on the Mayflower, he lived 51 years in Plymouth as an influential and respected citizen. He died at the age of 71 on February 23, 1672, having outlived all the other male passengers except John Soule, John Alden and John Cooke.

Richard R. Losch+

Law and Grace: Partners, Not Opposites

“The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). In the early days of the Protestant Reformation, one of the major disputes between Protestants and Catholics was about the authority of the Old Testament Law over Christians. Saint Paul says that we are saved by faith, but never denied that good works are also necessary. Luther argued that works are irrelevant, and when he translated the Bible he added the word “alone” (*allein*), saying that we are “saved by faith *alone*.” In Latin that is *Sola Fide*, and it is one of the Five Pillars of the Reformation.¹ The Bible uses the expression “faith alone” only once, when the Epistle of Saint James (2:24) states plainly that we are *not* saved by faith alone: “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” For that reason Luther refused at first to translate that epistle until his followers pressured him to do so.

The Greek of John 1:17 contains no conjunction, yet influenced by Luther’s doctrine of *Sola Fide* the translators of the King James Version chose to add the conjunction *but*: “The law indeed was given through Moses; *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” This completely changes the meaning of the passage by implying that Grace and Truth replaced the Law. Jesus himself said that he came not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. Unfortunately, although most translations do not insert a conjunction into the passage, the KJV translation has had its effect. Most people, when quoting the verse, assume that a “but” is implied and insert it into their thinking; thus Protestant theology teaches that Grace is the opposite of Law

¹ The Five Pillars of the Reformation are The Bible Alone (*Sola Scriptura*), Christ Alone (*Solus Christus*), Grace Alone (*Sola Gratia*), Faith Alone (*Sola Fide*) and To God Alone (*Soli Deo*). None of these are in the Bible, including *Sola Scriptura*, which Protestantism teaches is the foundation on which the other four are supported. Interestingly, nowhere in the Bible does it say that the Bible is the sole source of doctrinal authority. This is a fundamental disagreement between Protestantism and Catholicism, which argues that while the Bible is the Word of God, it was given to us by the Church. The Church gave us the Bible, not vice versa.

and is its replacement. This is not at all implied in the passage. The opposite of Grace is disgrace or shame, and the opposite of Law is anarchy. Grace enhances Law, it does not replace it.

Saint Paul tells us that the Law was given to us to convince us of sin (Rom. 3:19f)—i.e. to teach us about sin, and to guide our lives toward righteousness. It was given over a long period of time, and it ruled the Jews for over a thousand years before the coming of Christ. In a thousand years of working to obey it and of studying and interpreting it, they were imbued with a clear moral standard and a deeply rooted understanding of the spirit and meaning of the Law. With the coming of the Christian Covenant the Law was not abolished. We were released from obedience to its practical details (such as the dietary laws and circumcision), but in no way were we released from the moral and spiritual standards that obedience to those details had established over the centuries. The first step was the Law itself—“the Law was given through Moses.” The second and final step was the fulfillment of that Law by bringing its spirit into the very fiber of our being. That could be accomplished only by the free and unmerited gift of the Grace of God—“grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” There are no ifs, ands or *buts* about that.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last six years of *The Epistle*, including this issue, are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top. You can read it online or download it as a .pdf file. This is an easy way to share articles with others.

Richard R. Losch+

Imagine being crammed together with animals and 130 other people in a ship the size of a large tugboat, with 5½ foot ceilings below decks, no privacy, no toilets, no personal hygiene facilities, and only dried and salted food to eat. Then imagine living that way for 66 days while being tossed on rough seas. That’s what the Mayflower people endured. And you think flying commercial is an ordeal.

Abraham, the Hebrews and Hebrew

Most people are aware that the Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew¹ and that the people who became the Jews are often called Hebrews. What many are not aware of, however, is the origin of that name. In the second millennium BC, bands of Mesopotamian military groups wandered throughout the Middle East. They were known as *Ivrit* or *Ibrith* (עברית). The word derives from *ivri* (עברי), meaning “those who crossed over.” The *Ivrit* crossed over the Euphrates and moved west to hire themselves out as mercenary soldiers. Many scholars believe that this is the origin of the name Hebrew. Abraham’s following may well have been a band of *Ivrit*.

Abraham is often depicted as a simple holy man wandering in the wilderness with his family. If we read Genesis carefully, however, we see that he was far from that. He was a holy man, true, but he was also a wealthy and powerful leader of a very large nomadic tribe that included hundreds of family, followers and slaves, as well as enormous herds of animals. In many respects he was the ancient equivalent of a Bedouin sheik. From the stories of his battles as recounted in Genesis, it is evident that he was also a very competent general. Abraham, the Mesopotamian wanderer from Ur of the Chaldeans, was the father of the Hebrew people. It is a very reasonable conclusion that he was the leader of a tribe of *Ivrit* whose descendants were eventually invited to move into Egypt. There they were at first welcomed by the Semitic Hyksos rulers, possibly to aid them militarily. Later they were forced into servitude when the Hyksos were overthrown by the Egyptians, whom they had conquered a century earlier.

By far the most influential of the twelve tribes of Israel (thirteen if you include the Levites, who had no tribal territory) was

¹ Some of the later Old Testament writings were written in Aramaic. This is a Semitic language that is very similar to Hebrew, and uses the Hebrew alphabet (although in many areas it used cuneiform). In Jesus’ time it was the common language throughout the Middle East, and was his native tongue. By his time Hebrew was the language only of the religion and of scholars, much as Latin would be centuries later in Christian Europe.

that of Judah.¹ After the Assyrian exile (8th century BC) the tribe of Benjamin was absorbed into that of Judah, the Levites remained the landless hereditary priests, and the other ten tribes disappeared into oblivion, presumably absorbed into the Assyrian culture. In Biblical times the language we call Hebrew was known as Judahite (or “Jewish”), and it was in that language that almost all of the Old Testament was written. Even the name of the religion, Judaism, derives from the name Judah. Throughout the history of the Israelites, the tribe that remained most faithful to God was the tribe of Judah, and modern Judaism is the descendant of the religion of that tribe. The word Jew comes from the Hebrew *Yehudi* (יהודי), which means a member of the tribe of Judah (*Yehudah*, יהודה). In Hebrew today the language is called *Ivrit*, but in Biblical times it was *Yehudith* (יהודית), “Judahite,” or literally “Jews.” For centuries post-Diaspora Jews in eastern Europe spoke Yiddish. This is a mixture of Aramaic, German, and several eastern European languages. The name is a variant of the German *Jüdisch*, “Jewish.” From the third century AD until relatively modern times Hebrew was a dead language (one that is static and unchanging, and is not spoken as a primary language anywhere). In 1881 the Zionist movement revived it, and the Zionists in Palestine vowed to speak only Hebrew. Today it is very much alive, being the official legal language of the State of Israel.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ It is common to list the twelve sons of Abraham’s grandson Jacob (who was renamed Israel) as the twelve tribes, but that is not really accurate. His sons were (chronologically) Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. Levi’s descendants, called the Levites, were the priestly tribe (through Moses’ brother Aaron). They had no territory of their own, and are thus not considered a traditional tribe. They were distributed throughout the lands of the other twelve tribes, and had special privileges to make up for having no land. Joseph founded no tribe, but each of his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, did. King Saul was a Benjaminite, and King David was of the tribe of Judah.

At least 25% of the men on the Mayflower were named John. There may have been no bathrooms on the ship, but there were plenty of Johns.

Moses' Challenge to God

When Moses accepted God's call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, God promised him, "I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him" (Ex. 23:20f). Moses in his wisdom saw immediately that this was not a very good thing. Even though he had grown up in Pharaoh's palace as his adopted grandson, he had known the Israelites all his life, and he knew that they were a difficult and contrary people.¹

Moses had, if nothing else, an almost impudent audacity—what the Jews call *chutzpah*. This is not surprising. An arrogant hubris was inculcated into every upper-class Egyptian, and a man without it would have been considered a contemptible wimp. Ancient Egyptian culture did not admire humility or modesty, considering them weaknesses. As soon as God made the promise, Moses challenged it. In effect he said, "Don't send an angel. I want you to lead them yourself, personally, and if you won't then I'm not moving from this spot" (Ex. 33:12-16). He had a good reason for this. He knew the Israelites to be disobedient and ungrateful, and God had said of the angel, "Do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression." To lead the Israelites out of Egypt under these circumstances would have been to lead them to their own destruction. He said to God, "Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance." He put all his trust in God's forgiveness and mercy, which were qualities that God had already said the angel would not have. Moses knew that God's personal accompaniment of the people would be the only hope they could have for the future.

¹ Moses was undoubtedly conflicted as a youth. He (and everyone in the palace) knew that he was actually a Hebrew, yet he had been raised as a highly privileged Egyptian prince. Even as a prince he grew up not feeling completely Egyptian, yet also not being part of the Hebrew culture. In many respects he must have felt like a double outsider.

Thousands of years ago the Jews concluded that they had only two choices in the midst of trouble and persecution: to cry about them or to laugh at them. They chose the latter, and that sense of humor has sustained them to this day through every horror from the destruction of Israel and Judah, through medieval hatred and persecution, and even through the Holocaust. Considering Moses' challenge to God, the 18th century Hasidic Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev is credited with this prayer: "Lord of the universe, I want to propose a deal. We have many sins. You have much forgiveness. Let us exchange our sins for your forgiveness. And if you should say that this is not a fair exchange, then my reply is: If we had no sins, what would you do with all your forgiveness?"¹

Richard R. Losch+

The Unjust Judge and the Cheating Steward

There are two great errors that many Bible readers make. One is to think that parables were intended to make teachings clearer, and the other is to forget that Jesus had a sense of humor, and that he sometimes seems to have taken a keen delight in using it to get people's minds in gear. The reason Jesus used parables was not to make his teachings clearer, but to force people to think (Matt. 13:13ff). As for his sense of humor, it has been observed that God surely has a sense of humor—after all, he created goats, and kittens who chase their tails.² We can see from many Biblical passages that Jesus had a sense of humor, and I believe that we can see it particularly in two parables, the Unjust Judge (Lk 18:1-8) and the Dishonest Steward (Lk 16:1-12). In each of these we wonder why in the world Jesus would tell such a parable. Notwithstanding, once the real

¹ Thanks to Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg. The writer Sholom Aleichem understood this kind of humor when he created the fictional character Tevye (*Tevye's Daughters* and its offshoot, the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*). This is exactly the kind of prayer Tevye might have offered.

² And the fact that the full-sized replica of Noah's Ark in Williamstown, KY was recently damaged by a flood.

meaning dawns on us, in the back of our minds we can see Jesus chuckling and thinking, “Ah, that one made them think. We finally got the brain cells working—now they get it.”

In the first parable it looks like Jesus is comparing God to the uncaring, slothful judge, and in the other it looks like he admires the clever dishonesty of the cheating steward. Neither of these characters is someone that anyone would want to hold up as a role model for his child. When either of these parables comes up in the Sunday lections most preachers either hope that someone else is scheduled to preach that day, or they ignore the lesson altogether and preach on something else.

The lesson of the first parable is fairly clear—if the lazy judge who does not want to be bothered will finally mete out justice, how much more will a loving, caring God do so if we ask and not just take his providence for granted. The key point there is that we have to ask, and accept the fact that sometimes God, who knows what is best for us, will answer, “Not right now—you are not quite ready yet.”¹ The lesson of the parable of the dishonest steward is not so obvious until we realize that we are offered a choice: prepare for what will make us most comfortable in this world and lose out on the next, or prepare for what is best for eternity and accept whatever this world has to offer. If we choose the former, the cleverness of the steward is to be admired. If the latter, then neither the steward nor his master have much to hope for. The lesson of this parable is actually rather simple: if you want to have a happy ending in this world when things turn sour, then you had best get into good favor with those who can influence the outcome. So it is also if you wish to have a happy ending in the next world when you die. Prepare for the judgment, either in this world or the next. You cannot do both, however, so choose now.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ Sometimes people think that God is not answering their prayers. God answers every prayer. However, like a loving father, sometimes the answer is “Yes,” sometimes “No,” sometimes “Not yet,” and sometimes “That would not be good for you, but I will give you something better.”

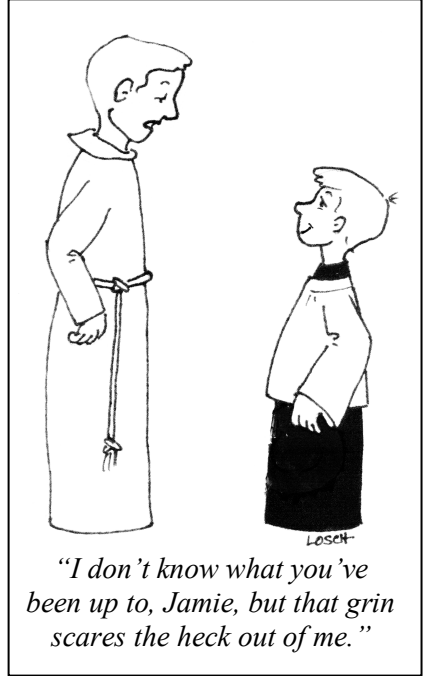
A Touch of Trivia

The *Mayflower* passengers did not choose the name Plymouth for their new home. Even though the ship sailed from Plymouth, England, it was not named for that port. Captain John Smith, previously a leader of the Jamestown, Virginia settlement, had selected the name when the voyage was first being planned. Most of the settlers had been living in exile in Holland, and the rest came from around London. The ship was originally supposed to sail from Dartmouth or Southampton, but bad weather forced it to sail from Plymouth at the last minute.

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JAMIE

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