

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
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This Month's Cover

Our cover this month, in honor of the Patron Saint of our parish, whose feast day is October 23, is *Saint James the Less* by El Greco. It is oil on canvas, measuring 3'2"x2'6". It was completed sometime between 1610-1614 and is displayed in the Museo de El Greco in Toledo, Spain. There were two Saints James, identified as the Greater and the Less because one was one of the first Apostles, and the other, who is called the Brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19), did not believe until after the Resurrection. Saint James the Apostle, the brother of John the Beloved Disciple, was almost certainly Jesus' first cousin, and was one of the first to answer his call to follow him. Saint James the Less, the author of the Epistle of Saint James, was the first Bishop of Jerusalem. It has been discussed for centuries whether James was the son of Joseph and Mary or whether he was Jesus' half-brother by a previous marriage of Joseph, or simply a cousin. The Greek word that we translate "brother" can mean any of these. It has been the Church's teaching from the beginning that Mary retained her virginity after bearing Jesus, but some modern Protestant commentators challenge that teaching and say that she had other children by Joseph. Very ancient tradition says that James lived in the household of Mary and Joseph. By the custom of the time if he were young and a close relative of either of them and had been orphaned, they would have taken him in. If so, it would have been normal to call him Jesus' brother. Also, if so, he would have apprenticed in Joseph's trade, which traditionally was carpentry, so one of his symbols is a saw. Extra-biblical sources report two accounts of his death. One says that he was stoned to death, and another that he was thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple. There is also a tradition that he was beheaded by the Romans,

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but this is doubtful. He was not a Roman citizen, and thus would have been crucified if the Romans had executed him.

Doménikos Theotokópoulos (1541-1614), commonly called El Greco (The Greek), was a leading painter, sculptor and architect in the Spanish Renaissance. Although he was generally known as El Greco during his lifetime, he signed his works with his full name in Greek letters, often adding the word *Kres*, Cretan. He was born on Crete, which has a Greek culture, although at that time it was a colony of the Republic of Venice, so he also had Venetian citizenship. He studied art on Crete until age 26, never having traveled to Venice as most Cretan artists did. In 1570 he moved to Rome and established a studio there. In 1577 he moved to Toledo, Spain, where he lived until his death in 1614. He was moderately appreciated during his lifetime, but for several generations after his death his work was disdained because it failed to follow the accepted styles and symbolism of the times. It was not until the end of the 18th century that critics re-examined his work and came to realize the innovative genius that it displayed. In many respects he paved the way for the expressionism that became so popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Picasso acknowledged a huge influence by El Greco on his own cubist period. One of the things that fascinated 18th century critics was El Greco's strange distortion of his subjects. Ironically, in the 20th century the American Optometric Association recognized that he had a severe astigmatism. Viewed through a corrective lens, his paintings suddenly look quite normal and undistorted.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

I often hear people say that a primary cause of the decay of American culture was the removal of prayer from our public schools. I do not agree, and I do not think that the restoration of school prayer would in any significant way lead us to a restoration of morality. The reason is that the removal of school prayer was not a cause of our cultural decay, but rather a symptom of the moral breakdown that was already flourishing.

Removal of a symptom is not a cure for the disease that caused it, but simply makes the disease easier to bear. Likewise, removal of that symptom by restoring school prayer will not cure the disease. Making it easier to bear would be the worst thing that could happen, because we would then have less incentive to confront the real problem. School prayer was abolished in 1962, when our country was in turmoil over the escalation of the war in Southeast Asia, and the rebellious “Beat” culture and its sexual revolution were blossoming. It was also the time of the first noticeable decline in Church attendance and support.

A primary tenet of every major world religion is the discipline of obedience to law. This has been the case throughout the history of civilization, and this is why almost all cultures until modern times have espoused an established state religion. Our founding fathers in their wisdom realized that establishing an official religion often causes more problems than it solves, not only for the state but also for the religion itself. For this reason they adopted the First Amendment, banning not only the establishment of a religion, but also any inhibition of the free exercise thereof. In their many writings we can see clearly that all of them, Christians, Deists and non-believers alike—all of them—recognized the importance of religion in maintaining the stability of society and of a nation. They also recognized that religion in general, and not any specific religion, was the key to this—thus the First Amendment. Unfortunately, in modern times this concept of freedom *of* religion has devolved into freedom *from* religion, and therein lies the problem. Without religion, only people of strong character have an incentive to obey the law, which is often a very inconvenient thing to do. Without that incentive the only alternative is to hire more and more police, and that inevitably leads to a police state and tyranny. Having proposed an analysis of the problem, I fear that I do not have an easy solution. I do know, however, that people of faith need not only to work to strengthen their own faith and share it with others, but also to pray fervently for a restoration of religion to our culture. Without that, we are in deep trouble.

Father Rick Lorch+

Be Wordly Wise

Diocese

A diocese is a region overseen by a bishop—this is hardly news to almost anyone—although the term is generally used only in the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches and their various offshoots. Most Protestant denominations prefer terms like District. The word diocese certainly ranks among the most frequently mispronounced words, especially in the plural. Diocese is pronounced **die**-uh-cess or **die**-uh-seez ('dīəsəs, 'dīəsēz), and its plural is dioceses. The plural does not roll off the tongue easily, so most people mispronounce it as the singular alternate, **die**-uh-seez.

The word originated in Greek as *diokēsis* (διοκῆσις), administration, which derives from *diokein* (διοκεῖν), to keep house. That comes from *dia-* (δια-), thorough, and *oikos* (οἶκος), house. That in turn comes from the Indo-European *weik*, clan. *Diokēsis* was picked up by Latin as *dioecesis*, governor's jurisdiction. Late Latin dropped the *e*, making it *diocesis*. That in turn entered Old French as *diocise*, which was used ecclesiastically as we use the word today. It then it moved into Middle English as *diocese* and has remained in that form ever since.

Richard R. Losch+

ECW United Thank Offering

The United Thank Offering (UTO) is a ministry of the Episcopal Church for the mission of the whole Church. Through the United Thank Offering, men, women and children nurture the habit of giving daily thanks to God. These prayers of thanksgiving start when we recognize and name our many daily blessings. Those who participate in UTO discover that thankfulness leads to generosity. The United Thank Offering is entrusted to promote thank offerings, to receive the offerings, and to distribute the UTO monies to support missions and ministries impacting the lives of women and children throughout the Episcopal Church and in invited Provinces of the Anglican Communion in the developing world.

The Episcopal Church Women's ingathering of the United Thank Offering will be on Sunday, October 21st. Envelopes for contributions are available on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins. Checks should be payable to the Episcopal Church Women (ECW).

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flowers

Volunteers are needed to provide altar flowers through 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

Blessing of the Animals on October 7th

In honor of the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, we will have a service of the Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, October 7th, 2018, at 2:00 p.m. in the courtyard. While altercations between animals are extremely rare at these services, we ask that your animals be leashed, tethered or caged. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this happy occasion.

Hiram Patrenos

The Gideons International

During the month of October we will be receiving contributions for the work of the Gideons International, who distribute tens of millions of free copies of the Bible and the New Testament throughout the world each year. We will not have a speaker from the Gideons, but will hold all contributions and forward them to the local chapter following our service on October 28th. Envelopes are available for contributions at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins at the Offertory. Checks should be made payable to "The Gideons."

Hiram Patrenos

Kairos #10

Scripture calls us to visit the prisoners. God recently gave me the opportunity to do so. I attended five Saturdays of training and bonding with my team members. In between trainings, we were coloring pictures, making posters, making prayer chains, signing up people to pray for us each hour of our time spent in the prison, soliciting donations, and just praying for the entire team, participants, and program. We also filled our many different sheets of paperwork and learned how to dress for our days “in prison.”

At last it was time! My 36 team members and I entered Aliceville Federal Prison for Women on Thursday afternoon to begin Kairos #10. We readied the room and supplies and welcomed 43 inmates at 6:00 that evening. I was surprised to learn that 7 had applied to attend for 3 years before being accepted.

It was wonderful to watch the walls and barriers come down, see the tears shed and then the smiles, hear inmates talking about what they had done or circumstances in their lives that gave them much pain. It was fun to watch as everyone loosened up, learned to sing and dance, forgive, and pray. There was a lot of love shared between many women in those 4 days!

When I say that we entered the prison, it was a bit more complicated than that. The process usually took an hour to an hour and a half and was extremely regimented. While there, we could only leave our building with a guard or 2 and only to go to meals or leave for the night. We ate with our participants in the dining facility before the general population ate.

The Kairos program is a planned and mostly scripted one that has been in existence for 40 years. Kairos Inside is for inmates, Kairos Outside is for loved ones of the incarcerated, and Kairos Torch is a mentoring program for incarcerated youth. Prayer and Share is a monthly Saturday during which all past Kairos participants meet with a few of the team leaders for continuing what they started in their Kairos weekend.

The inmates learned about Agape love. They were amazed when all of the pictures, posters, and prayer chains were put up in that plain tan room. They could not believe that people from

ages 3 to 90 had done these things for them without even knowing them. They saw the huge display of names of people who were praying for Kairos #10, and they learned of the many donations that had been made to make the weekend possible for them. There were many smiles all around. One participant said, "I didn't know that love really existed."

Maggie Noland

Hezekiah's Receding Shadow

In August of 2017 a total solar eclipse passed over the United States, with its greatest intensity and longest duration (over 2½ minutes) on the border of Kentucky and Missouri. It has been described as an eclipse "of Biblical proportions," and as worn as that expression is, it may well have been so. One phenomenon of an eclipse is "shadow waves." At the height of the darkness waves of shadows seem to move back and forth.

Hezekiah (r. 715-687 BC) was one of Judah's best kings. He was a reformer who cleaned up corruption in Judah and in the Jewish religious practices, and greatly strengthened both. However, he was critically ill with a "boil" that was probably some form of cancer (2 Kg. 20:1ff, Isa. 38:1ff). The best physicians of his time tried to treat it, but with no success. God sent the prophet Isaiah to tell him to get his affairs in order, because he would soon die of his disease. Hezekiah prayed for healing so that he could continue his work for Judah. Isaiah left him, but before he had left the palace God sent him back to the king with a new message, that he would heal him and add fifteen years to his life. Hezekiah asked for a sign, and he was told that he would see it in the shadows on the Temple steps. When asked whether he wanted to see the shadow advance or recede, he replied that since it normally advanced as the sun lowered in the sky, he would see it recede. When he went to the Temple, the shadow receded and Hezekiah was cured.

The NASA list of eclipses shows that on March 5, 702 BC, the sixteenth year before Hezekiah died, there was an eclipse over Jerusalem that could have produced shadow waves.

Richard R. Losch+

Adam's Rib

According to many translations of the Bible, God took a rib from Adam's side and from it made Eve (Gen. 2:21f). This has become so ingrained into our tradition that it has become a standard of our culture, whether we take the story literally or allegorically. Unfortunately, the whole thing is based on a 14th century mistranslation by John Wycliffe that was picked up by a series of translators thereafter and has become so traditional that it is even in many modern translations.¹ If we go back to the original Hebrew, however, we find two important things. First, Adam was not the man's name—he is not given a name. He is identified by the Hebrew *adam* (אָדָם), which means man in the sense of mankind, not an adult male human. Adam was not used as a name for him until much later in the Bible. In the Genesis story, a much better translation than Adam (as a name) would be the human being. We are told that God created him in his own image (Gen. 1:27), yet God is pure spirit, and has no physical body. Obviously, then, the spiritual image of God was imprinted on the being's soul, not God's physical form on his body. God is genderless, displaying all the virtues and traits that we esteem most greatly, both masculine and feminine. All these traits were reflected in the image of God that was implanted in the human being, who was also genderless.

This brings us to the second important point that we discover if we go back to the original Hebrew text. The word that Wycliffe translated rib is *tsela* (צֵלַע), which means side, not rib. In Ex. 25:12, for example, Moses is told to make four gold rings, two for each side (*tsela*) of the Ark of the Covenant. The clear implication, then is not that God took a rib from the human being, but that he split him right down the middle, with

¹ A similar early mistranslation has led to the tradition that Jesus and Joseph were carpenters. The Greek that Wycliffe translated carpenter is *tekton* (τεκτον), which means worker in hard materials. It is far more likely that they were stonemasons, as that was an important trade in the region of Nazareth, whereas a carpenter could have barely eked out a living with the lack of wood there. Later translators picked up the word carpenter from Wycliffe, however, and that has since become a solid tradition.

one side becoming the male and the other side the female. Instead of being a single entity bearing all the masculine and feminine attributes, he was now two beings, a male with the masculine traits and a female with the feminine ones. In the very next verse the man says, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23). If she were created just from a rib, she would have been only “bone of my bones.” It is significant that the next verse is, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” The goal, then, is the reunification of the masculine and feminine into a single entity, the nuclear family, which is the closest we can come to emulating the unity and integrity of God.

It is for this reason that from the earliest times the Judaic ideal of the fundament of society was the nuclear family, and this ideal was carried directly into Christianity. It was also recognized by almost all other cultures even in ancient times as the basis of society and the only acceptable venue for reproduction. This is also why Judaism and Christianity have for millennia rejected all deviations from this ideal, such as bestiality, pedophilic or homosexual activity, or any other physical relationship that is non-reproductive and thwarts the reunification of the masculine and feminine in the nuclear family. It has nothing to do with a distaste for the actual physical acts, but rather it is based on the theological grounds of reintegrating the image of God. Whether one accepts the Genesis story as literal or metaphorical, its meaning in the original text is clear.

Many modern interpreters have tended to ameliorate this and accept these deviations from the Genesis ideal. This has become a source of considerable contention in both Judaism and Christianity today between those who believe in an immutable natural law and those who believe that morality is relative to the cultural standards of the times. Notwithstanding, in neither case does that justify anger, antipathy or the hurling of ugly epithets, as seems to have become the norm today. It does, however, require us to think, discuss, and pray for guidance in order that we may better discern God’s will.

Richard R. Losch+

A Day of Great Mourning

Each year ancient Jewish tradition observes the fast day of Tisha b'Av, which is a day of fasting and mourning for all the disasters that have befallen the Jewish people over the centuries. *Tisha b'Av* in Hebrew means “ninth [day of the month] of Av,” and in 2018 that fell on July 21.¹ Unlike Yom Kippur, which is a day of fasting and mourning for personal sins and the sins of the people, Tisha b'Av mourns the great disasters that the Jewish people as a nation have suffered.

It was established as a fast day in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadrezzar II destroyed Solomon's Temple and then in a series of waves carried the Jewish people into captivity in Babylonia. When in A.D. 70 the Romans leveled the Second Temple, that event was added to the observance. Since then, a number of calamities have been added as specific remembrances on Tisha b'Av, including the expulsion of Jews from Palestine (A.D. 132), the First Crusade (1096),² the expulsions of Jews from England (1290), France (1306) and Spain (1492), the start of World War I (1914),³ and the start of the mass deportation of Jews to the death camps from the Warsaw Ghetto (1942).⁴

The observance begins at sundown on the 8th of Av, and ends at sundown on the 9th. It begins just before sundown on the 8th with a meal of eggs dipped in ashes. Most Jews who

¹ The Jewish liturgical calendar is lunar, so the modern calendar dates of its observances vary from year to year. The only major Christian feast that is based on the lunar calendar and thus varies is Easter.

² We think of the First Crusade as a conflict between Christians and Muslims. However, the Jews suffered intensely during it, more than in any of the subsequent Crusades, at the hands of both Christians and Muslims.

³ While Jews fought on both the German and the Allied sides, World War I fueled the Russian Revolution in which Russian Jews were brutally persecuted by both Tsarists and Bolsheviks.

⁴ The Holocaust *per se* is not a specific remembrance on Tisha b'Av because it was not a single event, but rather a conflation of a great number of horrific events. Notwithstanding, many Jews include *Kristallnacht*, the official beginning of the Holocaust (November 9, 1938).

observe the fast consider it the worst day of the year. It includes not only total fasting, but also many other traditional prohibitions: sitting on only low stools, not chairs; no bathing, perfumes, cosmetics or jewelry; no music or reading—not even study of Torah, because to a devoted Jew that is considered a joy. The day is devoted solely to contemplation of the sufferings of the Jewish people, remorse for their frequent backsliding that has weakened their relationship with God, and remembering that God in his mercy will always supply sufficient strength to endure suffering and will always forgive a repentant people and restore them to happiness and prosperity.

The challenge is offered today that since God has restored the people and given them the Nation of Israel, it is no longer necessary to observe Tisha b'Av. Continuing to mourn over past calamities may even show ingratitude to God by failing to see the divine significance of that restoration, and dwelling on the past rather than looking to the future. That question goes back more than 2500 years. When King Cyrus of Persia released the captive Jews and sent them back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and the city, the question was asked if mourning for the destruction of the Temple was any longer necessary. The prophet Zechariah (7:1ff) answered in effect that only when the people are free from sin and totally dedicated to God can they cease to mourn: “Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy each to his brother, do no oppress the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, or the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart” (Zech. 7:9-10).

Richard R. Losch

The Epistle is Online

The last five years of *The Epistle* are now 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+

Jesu, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah

When Jesus confronted the Samaritan woman at the well¹ (Jn. 4:7ff) he told her, “Salvation is from the Jews.” If we go back to the original text it is clear that this does not simply mean all the Jewish people, but is a direct reference to the Tribe of Judah.² When Jacob blessed his fourth son Judah he said,

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
 your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
 your father’s sons shall bow down before you.
Judah is a lion’s whelp;
 from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
 He crouches down, *he stretches out like a lion,*
 like a lioness—who dares rouse him up?
 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
 nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
 Until tribute comes to him;
 and the obedience of the peoples is his” (Gen. 49:8-10).

Even though Joseph was his favorite son, Jacob recognized that it was through the line of Judah that the Messiah, the Christ, would be given.³ When Jesus told the woman that salvation is from the Jews (the line of Judah), she would have recognized immediately what he meant by salvation. To both Jews and Samaritans the concept of salvation meant making God’s rule manifest on earth. It was rooted in many passages of Torah, which was honored by the Samaritans as well as the Jews. Salvation, being saved, meant being delivered from the chaos of sin and disobedience, and enjoying the peace and bliss of

¹ It is significant that that well had been dug centuries earlier at the behest of Jacob, Abraham’s grandson and Judah’s father.

² Although Jesus lived in Galilee, his tribe was that of Judah and he was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the tribal territory Judah. The religion that he practiced, which was that of most of the other tribes as well, was rooted in Judah and to this day is known as Judaism. Jacob’s son whom we call Judah is actually Yehudah (יהודה). The Hebrew for Jew is Yehudi (יהודי).

³ In fact the two tribes that we descended from Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, were both rebellious troublemakers.

submission to God. This is the same reign to which Jesus refers as “the Kingdom of God.”

In Revelation 5:5 Jesus (a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Judah) is referred to as the Lion of the tribe of Judah:

“Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.’”

Salvation, the Kingdom of God, has been brought to us. Christ, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, has conquered.

Richard R. Losch+

Gentile Dogs

When Jesus was traveling in Phoenicia, the region of Tyre and Sidon, a Gentile woman (a Syro-Phoenician) besought him to heal her demon-possessed daughter (Matt. 15:21ff). At first he ignored her, but then, when his disciples urged him to answer her, he said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” She still persisted, and he said, “It isn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

This is one of those often-misunderstood sayings that many Christians wish Jesus had never said. On the surface it appears that he not only refused her, but coldly insulted her, calling her a dog, just because she was a Gentile. Before we dismiss this as a harsh and uncalled-for rebuff, however, we need to understand the ancients’ relationship to dogs.

Throughout the ancient world the idea of an “inside dog”—one who lives in the home—was almost unheard of. In many ancient cultures dogs were mainly used for work, most commonly for hunting, as guards or attack dogs, or as herders of livestock. Even so, there was often a loving relationship between humans and their dogs, and it was not rare, especially among the Romans and Greeks, to keep dogs just as companions or pets. Notwithstanding, even pet dogs were rarely welcome in the house.

Most ancient Middle Eastern cultures despised dogs. This is

understandable considering that in the Middle East the wilderness areas were rife with roving packs of wild dogs that could be even more dangerous than wolves because they had less fear of humans.¹ To this day most descendants of the ancient Arabic nations loathe dogs. Because of a bad experience Muhammad had with a puppy, Islam teaches that Allah despises dogs.² Calling someone a dog would have been a vile insult, equivalent to our calling someone a pig.

The Jews, on the other hand, had an attitude toward dogs that was more like that of the Romans. They used them for work, and they kept them for companionship and as pets. Because they were ritually unclean as food, however, they were not allowed inside their houses. They were considered friends of the family, but they were not part of the family as many people today view their pet dogs. Just as today, table scraps and any food that fell on the floor was given to the dogs.

With this in mind, let us return to Jesus and the Gentile woman. When he initially ignored her, it was to see how serious she was. If she had simply gone her way she would have indicated that she did not have sufficient faith to help her daughter. What he said was that his first duty was to his family—the Jews—and not to outsiders. Once his family is taken care of, then a good parent will look beyond to help others. When she proved her faith in him by persisting, he challenged her further by saying that one does not take the food that is intended for the family and throw it to the dogs. He was not insulting her by calling her a dog, but rather pointing out that she was an outsider, not a member of the family. When she reminded him that even the dogs, the outsiders, get to share a part of what is the family's, he then commended her for her faith and healed her daughter.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ When Jezebel was thrown out the window to her death, wild dogs ravaged her body, leaving nothing but her skull, the palms of her hands, and the soles of her feet (I Kg. 9:35ff).

² It is not true that Muhammad ordered the killing of all dogs and all pigs. He simply declared them unclean and ordered that they are to be allowed to run free, but no Muslim is to eat or have any physical contact with either.

A Touch of Trivia

In 1891, over the objection of incumbent President Benjamin Harrison, electricity was installed in the White House. Wires were strung on poles across the lawn, and inside they were buried in the plaster of the walls. The lights were controlled by large round porcelain switches. Harrison and his wife were afraid of electrocution by this ten-year-old novelty and refused to use it, so the servants turned the lights on and off.

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JAMIE

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