

SAINT MATTHIAS

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Saint Matthias Messenger

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Sundays at 8:00 & 10:00 AM
First Saturdays at 5:00 PM

Services streamed live on
Sundays at 10:00 AM at
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The Power of Conversation

During the evening of May 6th twelve of us met with my good friend, Dr. Larry Budner, for an evening of discussion regarding the Torah and the Talmud. Dr. Budner is an important child psychiatrist in Orange County and a cantor in his synagogue. He and I met many years ago at The Church of the Messiah in Santa Ana. He was a member of my discernment committee as we tested my call to ministry and he has remained a close friend for all the years since.

The Torah is technically the first five books of the Bible. However, it is much more than that. It also contains the law and rules for living for the Jewish community, most of whom the Christian community continues to honor. We Christians honor Torah for many reasons, but among them we recognize it informed the life of Jesus as well as all those living in the Holy Land.

The Talmud encompasses the "Oral Torah", the attempt by rabbis over the centuries to understand and explain what Torah has to say. It encompasses over six thousand pages of that thinking.

When Jesus was speaking to the crowds and the scripture experts of his time, he was referring to the Torah in his remarks. He understood the Torah in ways most of them did not. This is why the Scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees were often so much at odds with him. Jesus' understood God through the Torah in a radical new way for his time.



"Nicodemus and Jesus on a Rooftop" - Henry Ossawa Tanner

One of my favorite New Testament stories is about an important Pharisee named Nicodemus. He went to see Jesus at night. The scripture leads us to believe that he visited Jesus at night in order not to have been seen going there by other Pharisees. This might be true, but he also might have done so because his day job demanded it. You see Pharisees weren't full time scholars. They were part time as they had to make a living too.

Nicodemus was intrigued by Jesus' thinking, just as he

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might have been intrigued by another great teacher's thinking. In the story Jesus explained some important concepts to him, concepts that Nicodemus had a difficult time understanding. I imagine his theology of Torah was pretty hard wired, and that made it hard for him to take in what Jesus had to say. But at least he tried and probably succeeded to some extent.

As we think about ancient time, we are tempted to make the characters two-dimensional. They were heroes or cowards. They were holy or they were evil. They were smart or stupid. They were followers of Jesus or they rejected him.

Probably none of these ways of understanding ancient people are true. You see they all were people. They lived and loved. They had children. They worked. They studied. They hoped to make lives for themselves.

So, recognizing this we understand then that the Pharisees worked for a living and raised families. The Sadducees tried to keep life in the Temple moving along and went home to their families. The Scribes advised others regarding very practical things, visited friends, and loved their families too.

If we are really sincere in our quest to understand Jesus Christ, we must also seek to understand those he encountered. What made them tick? What were their lives like? Why did they do the things they did? What were they afraid of? What were they willing to fight for and why? I know for myself these questions have a profound influence on my thinking.

As I think about life today, I realize we also see many of the people in our society and the world in two-dimensional terms. They too are good or evil, stupid or smart, right or wrong, holy or not.

I hope we can remember that these characterizations are not true either. Instead, I suggest we would be wise to remember other people are not as we think about them. They have families. They love their children. They are smarter than we give them credit for being. They do not see their ideas in the same way we do.

God created the folks in the first century and God created the folks in this century. And we are not all that dissimilar. Like them we don't agree with each other more often than any of us are comfortable with. But the good news is that like Nicodemus we can ask questions. We can exchange ideas. We can try to understand what the other side is saying.

I pray we will begin to do so more often, and the sooner the better.

meaning Christ can bring to their lives. Even more have no idea why church attendance might be a good thing.

This is our mission field. God has promised to supply us with the words needed to solve these massive problems as we encounter them, one opportunity at a time. Next time you get a chance, trust God, and reach out to someone in need. Talk to them about God. Talk about the difference Jesus makes in your life. Talk about the benefits of church attendance. These are the greatest gifts we have to give.

Fr. Bill +

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

Updating Our Parish Profile

About 11 years ago, the members of St. Matthias created our current Parish Profile. The Parish profile is a document created by the members of the congregation that provides an assessment of what's going on at our Parish, identifies our strengths and opportunities, provides the Diocese with a look at what's happening at our Parish, and it explores where we are headed and what our goals for the future might be. The time has come to take another look. Over the past 11 plus years, much has changed at St. Matthias and it would be beneficial to update our profile to reflect those changes.

We are looking for a few members of our congregation who would be willing to work together to refresh our Parish Profile. Your observations and insights are crucial to insuring that the profile accurately reflects the spirit of our Parish and St. Matthias' impact on our community. If you are interested in participating, please email me at tim@stmatthiaswhittier.org. I hope you will share your interest by participating in this project.

-Tim Adams, Senior Warden



God and Country

We're just past observance of the sacrifices made by so many on Memorial Day. I was recently asked to speak to one of the service groups on the topic of "God and Country" and how our faith connects what we value in our civic life. So I told them this story.

Harry, was a tall, strong kid at the start of World War I who enlisted in the army and was assigned to be an ambulance driver with the famous Rainbow Division in France. His job was to collect the wounded and transport them to a hospital. He did this by night when it was safer to move around without being seen by the enemy. His ambulance had headlights about the strength of a candle. So Harry drove the wounded to safety over the rough and rutted dirt roads with only the moon and the stars to light the way.

One night he was making his way down one of these roads when a French farmer, angry at the war's pushing its way onto his land, jumped out in front of the ambulance waving a rake and shouting. By the time Harry saw him it was too late to stop. He struck the farmer who died instantly. Harry was mortified. The man's distraught family insisted that Harry be punished. Harry was told he would be court martialed. If convicted he'd spend the rest of his life in a military prison. He was 18-years-old.

On the day of the court martial, things looked bleak. The facts were not in dispute and the victim's family was pushing hard for the harshest possible sentence. At the end of the day Harry waited in a cell. A colonel came to see him with two MP's. "This is it," Harry thought. "My life is over." But the colonel had life-giving words: "Son, we're done here. The good Lord above didn't put you on this earth to spend the rest of your life in a cell." He handed Harry some transfer papers and the MP's spirited him out a back door to a new assignment and his life restored.

When I think of where God and country connect, I think of this officer sworn to the task of defending his country and all the disciplines that are crucial to that task while also bringing a heaping helping of God's mercy, compassion and love to bear for those of low rank like a mere ambulance driver. It's not hard to imagine that this officer in wartime had many pressing matters to deal with. But he chose to step in and defer earthly authority to instead reflect God's command to love.

In Luke 12:6 Jesus reminds us how precious each of us is. We are thoroughly known and loved. Even the most common creatures, the sparrows, are seen and cherished. God loves us, God's children, so completely that the very hairs on our heads are counted.

If we pay too much attention to popular rhetoric we might get distracted from this task of loving others. It seems to put God in a very small box where Love is only for certain people under certain circumstances. That's just not so. God's love extends to all of God's creation and that includes everyone all the time. Receiving such great love comes with an invitation to pass it on.

Harry was honorably discharged in 1919, married Stella (the prettiest girl in town and my grandmother), and started a family and a business that provided a good living for himself and many employees for three generations. Harry proved the colonel right. Our gracious God apparently put Harry on earth to lend a hand to folks who fell on hard times and inspire them to do the same for others. He did it all his life. What's more connective of our faith and our country's values than that?

My prayer for all of us is that we never allow God to be put in a box, that the simple message of doing the loving thing transcends all other messages and all that we do even when we have only the moon and stars to light the way.

Rev. Carole+



Torah and Talmud Presentation

As Fr. Bill mentioned in his article for this month, we recently experienced a very informative slice of a very large and sacred body of work as we were introduced to the Torah and the Talmud. It is said that the Talmud in its entirety is as large as the entire Encyclopedia Britannica. Rabbinical scholars have undertaken the exhausting task of distilling the words in the Pentateuch or the Torah in an effort to provide clarity and to stimulate thought around the words of God's Law.

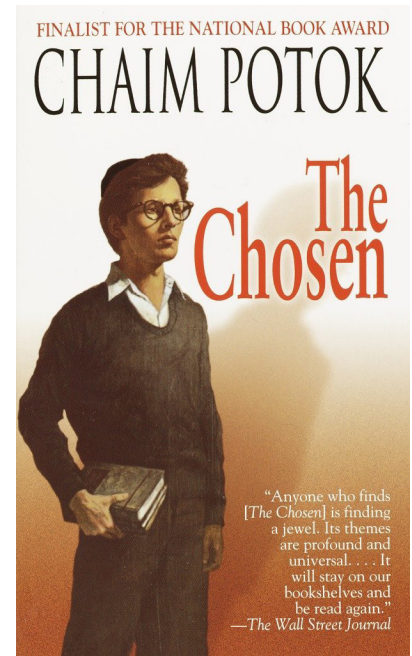
For some time leading up to this learning opportunity, I was curious about the link between these two bodies of literary and spiritual importance, particularly, for the Jewish faith. Dr. Larry Budner, with whom many of us are familiar by virtue of his leadership of our Maundy Thursday Seder each year, offered an exercise in the Torah and Talmudic study. When he told us of the size of the Talmud, I wondered even more as to how we could wrap our brains around it.

Dr. Budner selected a passage or a Mishnah dealing with laws pertaining to fences or walls around property. Breaking the passage down into bite-size pieces, if you will, and surrounding it with commentary from the Talmud, we got a high-altitude view of how these two foundational works are so delicately entwined. It was interesting, stimulating and fun as we offered our own observations and arguments to those of the scholars whose contributions created the work that is the Talmud. In addition to participating in the exercise into the ongoing Rabbinical study of the Torah and the surrounding commentary provided by the Talmud, we got a brief overview of the history of the Talmud. I began to realize there is less mystery about it and more of an invitation to visit it for knowledge and spiritual enlightenment.

How did this all come about, you might ask? Well, the Men's Book Club selected for its April read the novel, *The Chosen*, by Chaim Potok. *The Chosen* is set in the Orthodox Jewish community of Williamsburg in Brooklyn, New York, during the closing moments of WWII. It tells the story of the relationship of two orthodox Jewish teen boys, one from a traditional orthodox background and the other from an ultra-orthodox Hasidic background. It opened windows onto their lifestyles, and more importantly it provided a close-up view of the relationship between each of these two boys and the sometimes excruciatingly painful relationship between Danny and his ultra-orthodox Rabbi father. I'm certain that each of us who read *The Chosen* were moved by its language, its story and the message of love that it imparted.

St. Matthias has so many great things to offer and it's no coincidence that questions from the Men's Book Club experience around *The Chosen* lead to the opportunity to have the Torah and the Talmud presentation. The Men's Club is presently entrenched in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway. I hope you will accept this invitation to join us in discussion of this great work on Thursday, June 17 at 6:30PM. The Zoom details for participation in the Men's Book Club will be published in the mid-week update just prior to the meeting. So grab a hold of a copy of this great book and join us. There's no telling where this next adventure may take us. You're invited to join us even if you haven't read the book!

-Tim Adams, Senior Warden



A Letter of Thanks

To the women of St Matthias and their loving spouses, I want to thank you for your meals that have sustained us as I went through my 3 operations and beginning recovery. They were so appreciated! How every night a different delicious dish would arrive to the house sometimes accompanied by a card, dessert or flowers really made the evenings special. The thoughts and prayers that came along meals and the texts asking about updates meant a lot as well. I am really touched by all of you who reached out and it made a difference. It is wonderful to belong to such a loving parish!

-Sophie McIntosh

How To Pray Without Ceasing - Part IV

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

-1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In his article last month, Sam left you with the prayer that begets prayer: "Lord, help me to pray." Now, this is a very good place to begin; who could be better at helping us learn to pray than the One we are trying to pray to? With the Holy Spirit drawing us to herself, we begin to pray. And as we begin, what should we talk about with God? What do we actually say?

In his book on prayer *Letters to Malcolm*, C.S. Lewis suggests a simple and powerful principle for anyone who wants to start praying: "Begin where you are." Here's my best definition of prayer: Offering ourselves to God as we are, and receiving God as God is. That's it. Nothing more, nothing less. If my definition is a good one, then there is no better advice for all of us who want to pray than Lewis's principle. We must offer ourselves to God, here and now, as we are. Are you in agony over the illness of a loved one? Bring this grief to Jesus; the man of sorrows is grieving too. Are you seething with anger at another injustice that flashes across your news-feed? Be angry with Jesus; chances are, he's praying for this situation too. Are you on a particularly beautiful walk, the leaves dancing in the wind? Thank Jesus for the blazing beauty he has sown in the world. Thomas Merton says that every moment and event of our lives is a 'seed' that "should awaken us to the possibility of an uninterrupted dialogue with God." If we remember from Sunday school that God is omniscient then we can say, like Merton, that God is hiding behind all things, just waiting for us to pay attention long enough to notice. Offering ourselves as we are includes offering all of the things, people, and events that are related to us to us, in all of the love, grief, anger, and gratitude that we feel towards them. Both things as trivial as the light coming in the kitchen window as we wash dishes and things as crushingly important as our anxiety for a suffering friend can become a spur to prayer.

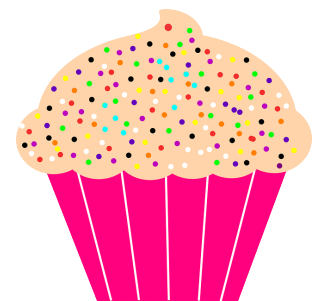
Need some concrete words to start praying with most of the time? Me too. Words are like a conductor's baton or a canal, they serve to shape and channel our thoughts, feelings, and desires into some concrete form that both allows us to understand ourselves and to offer those thoughts, feelings, and desires to God. That said, God is not a divine vending machine, and there are no magic words that will unlock God's power if we say them just right. In a certain sense, it doesn't matter which words we say, as long as they are honest. For me and, I imagine, most of us, however, the words and prayers of the saints and poets who have come before us can be powerfully instructive and helpful in our prayers. Those who have walked before us on the Way of Jesus have left us words that can help us see ourselves and God more clearly and offer ourselves more fully. Open up a Book of Common Prayer and try the Daily Devotions. Go to the Psalms or other prayers in the Scriptures. Find the words and rhythms that can help you begin to pray, wherever you are. And in the end, remember not to worry too much. Prayer is not performance before God, and Jesus does not look down from the throne of grace to judge us on our eloquence and piety before he decides how to respond. Rather he is waiting to meet us, eager to offer himself to us in all the complexities of our lives; we need only turn and receive him. The most important thing is simply to begin.

-J.D. Neal, Youth Sunday School Teacher

EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN Let the Bidding Begin!

You don't want to miss out on getting your sweet tooth fix! Bidding is now (or will very soon be) open for all of the delicious goodies made by your friends at St. Matthias. Your purchase supports ECW and allows ECW to support various other Saint Matthias Ministries. Please visit the online baking auction. You can place a bid from May 30th until June 13th. The buyer and baker will arrange delivery between themselves. Don't miss out on this "sweet and tasty" way to support the ministries of Saint Matthias. Your generosity is greatly appreciated! Thank you!

-Janice Webster, ECW Co-Chair



PUZZLE

Conundrums of creation

God's creation is filled with amazing and sometimes puzzling works.

Directions: Use the bank of picture clues to answer the riddles.



- You can hold but not touch this. -----
- Before using this, you must break it. ----
- This falls without getting hurt. -----
- This gets bigger the more you take away. ----
- This has an eye but cannot see. -----

"In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the ____.
 It is like ... a champion rejoicing to run his course.
 It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit
 to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth."

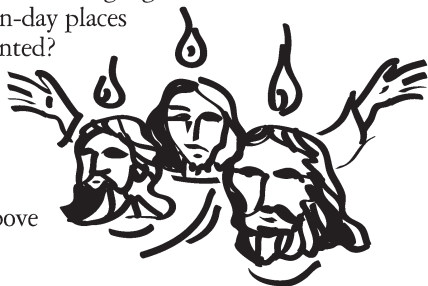
PSALM 19:4-6, NIV

Answer: breath, egg, rain, hole, hurricane, sun

Bible Quiz

While in Jerusalem for Pentecost, people from many faraway lands miraculously heard the disciples preaching in their own native languages. Which of the following modern-day places was/were represented?

- A. Egypt
- B. Libya
- C. Crete
- D. Rome
- E. All of the above
- F. A, B and D

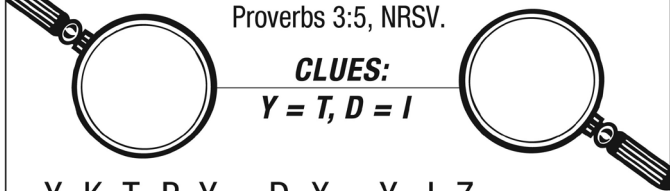


Answer: E (See Acts 2:9-11.)



Puzzle!

For this cryptogram, use the clues to decode Proverbs 3:5, NRSV.



CLUES:
 Y = T, D = I

Y K T P Y D X Y J Z

 V Q K R F D Y J O V V

 C Q T K J Z O K Y, O X R

 R Q X Q Y K Z V C Q X

 C Q T K Q F X D X P D L J Y.

Answer: Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. Proverbs 3:5, NRSV



Women's Retreat: July 16-18

The Annual Women's Retreat is back! After a year of Covid isolation, we'll gather safely at the beautiful Mary and Joseph Retreat in Rancho Palos Verdes to spend time together reflecting and sharing one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit - Joy! Cost will be \$220 for shared room, \$295 for single room. Payment in full will be due by July 1st. Scholarships are available.



Services, Events, and Small Groups

Many of our small groups are currently in the process of returning to in-person meetings, some are using a hybrid model, and others are choosing to stay on Zoom for now. Contact the small group leader or see the church website for the most current info.

- ✦ **Holy Eucharist**, Sundays at 8am (in-person only) and 10am (in-person and streaming live at <https://www.facebook.com/stmatthiaswhittier>)
- ✦ **Men Eating Badly**, First Saturdays at 8 am, Greenleaf Cafe - Contact Fr. Bill for details.
- ✦ **Evening Healing Service with Holy Eucharist**, First Saturdays at 5pm (in-person only)
- ✦ **Family Fellowship**, Sunday June 6th and July 11th at 11:15 am, playground- Email Andrea Schmid at andrea@stmatthiaswhittier.org for details.
- ✦ **Summer Compline**, Mondays at 8pm beginning June 7th, Zoom - Contact Rev. Carole for details.
- ✦ **Our Time**, June 15th, 2:00-3:30 pm, Chapel - Contact Rev. Carole for details.
- ✦ **Men's Bibliophile Group**, next meeting June 17 at 6:30 pm to discuss *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway - Contact Chuck Carrillo for the Zoom meeting ID and pass code.
- ✦ **Daughters of the King**, 3rd Sundays at 1pm - Contact Rev. Carole for details.
- ✦ **Women's Book Group**, next meeting July 11 at 7pm to discuss *Unorthodox* by Deborah Feldman- Email Andrea Schmid at andrea@stmatthiaswhittier.org for details.
- ✦ **Divine Connection Through Body and Breath**, Fridays at 10am, Saturdays at 10:30am, and Sundays at 2pm; Zoom - Email Cynthia Orsini-Dahl at cynthia@cynthiaorsinidahl.com for log-in details.

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Worship at Saint Matthias - June 2021

June 6

Trinity Sunday

Scripture:

Genesis 3:8-15, Psalm 130, 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1, Mark 3:20-35

June 13

The Third Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture:

Ezekiel 17:22-24; Psalm 92:1-4,11-14; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10-17; Mark 4:26-34

June 20

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture:

Job 38:1-11; Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41

June 27

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture:

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15, 2:23-24; Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15
Mark 5:21-43



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