

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 12:49-56

"Clueless"

It wasn't too long ago – between 1988 and 1994 that I was blessed to have a unique working relationship with the New York Mets and their fantasy camp called "Ulti-Met week." You might be saying why wasn't I with the Braves? Well, at the time I lived in New York, and grew up as a Mets fan. What a sensational time I had, rubbing elbows with the likes of Hall of Famer Tom Seaver, Bud Harrelson and all of World Champion Mets of 1969, and other former great Mets. This was a 'lifetime experience.' My wife, Marilyn used to kids me and asked "How is it that you did a 'once in a lifetime experience' eight times?" What can I say?

Besides playing and working alongside these major-leaguers – I gained a lot of insight into the inner workings of the major league baseball clubhouse, the camaraderie, and of course - the sarcasm. One of the classic jokers was Clint Hurdle – who is now the manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates. Clint would give the dickens to any of the 'paying' campers who exhibited daily that they didn't have a clue. There were people from all walks of life, doctors, dentists, teachers; you name it – all of who paid several thousand dollars to come to Florida for one week and play baseball. Steve Zabriskie, former Mets announcer and who with his wife, helped to run 'Ulti-Met Week', would say "People come from all over to do one thing – Play Baseball – and play it badly." Many were playing for the first time in their life. Clint would keep a scrupulous eye on everyone – and scrutinize their appearance. He would keep a careful account and the results would come out at our daily 'morning meeting.' You see, there is a certain technique to putting on a major league uniform, and if you miss just one step – you can look all wrong. Every morning Clint would jokingly fine campers a dollar who missed a belt loop, whose socks were on all wrong, or who might be missing a most important piece of protective gear that was mandatory for everyone. There was one camper named Billy, who really did not have a clue. No matter how we would patiently show him the correct way – he marched to a different drummer. One day he dressed in his uniform and came out for the morning meeting – missing his white "under or sanitary socks" that go under the blue stirrup socks, and it did not go unnoticed by Clint, who came into the Pro's clubhouse and proclaimed that Billy "couldn't hit water if he fell out of a boat!" We got the point – Billy was clueless as well as sock-less.

In today's Gospel from Luke – Jesus is troubled by the fact that others around Him are clueless to what is going on around them. Jesus, our Prince of Peace, is declaring that following Him is the cause of division for many, even families, rather than peace. A crisis was coming, of which the fate of Jesus' own life was right at the very center. Jesus was under great stress with His coming crucifixion – or as He called it – "His baptism." Jesus wished that this baptism of suffering on the cross would be over – not for His own relief – but for relief for all of humanity! There were signs all around these people – but they just couldn't see. Jesus told them that they have learned to forecast the weather **Luke 12:54-55** "*When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is.*" Why is it that these signs can be read – but when it comes to the Roman Occupation, Herod's unholy regime, the wealthy and arrogant

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high priests, or the false agendas of the Pharisees – they cannot put two and two together? Besides – standing right in front of them is the One they have been waiting for, the Holy One of Israel! Talk about not seeing the signs – a perfect example of being clueless!

It's like when a certain State Trooper pulled over a car that was crawling along a busy highway at just 22 miles an hour. As the trooper approached the car, he discovered it had five elderly women inside. He noticed that while the driver seemed quite calm, the rest of the passengers were as white as a ghost. Before the officer could say a word, the driver said to him, "Officer, I don't understand why you pulled me over. I was driving the exact speed limit for this road." He told her, "I didn't stop you for speeding but because you were driving too slowly. Slow driving on a major highway can be just as dangerous as speeding." She looked at him and with defiance in her voice she said, "I just saw the sign and it said the speed limit is 22 miles per hour!" Laughing, he explained to her that 22 IS NOT the speed limit but the route number of the highway that she was driving on. Somewhat rattled and unsettled, the woman thanked the State Trooper for pointing out her error. However, before he let her go, he asked her, "Excuse me, Ma'am, I couldn't help but wonder if the rest of your passengers are OK. They look very shaken up to me." The driver said, "**Oh, they will be fine in just a few minutes. You see we just turned off of Route 134!**"

If the Kingdom of God is to come "*on earth as it is in heaven*" then the church has to understand what is going on around them, and then address those issues with the unchangeable message from heaven – God's Holy Word – the Bible. I am reminded that BIBLE can be seen as **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**. That is fine – if you believe that the Holy Scriptures are God breathed and God's inspired instructions for mankind – but once again – we have that division in today's society – don't we? Why is it that so many are clueless to the power and authority of God's Word – and it's Truth? You see the very Word of God carries the message that gives the answers to the clueless – and also to prophesy the division that would take place. The Prophet Micah foretold this in Micah 7:6-7 "*the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; your enemies are members of your own household. But as for me, I will look to the LORD, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*" My brothers and sisters in Christ, the only way forward is to have complete trust in God – and His Holy Word.

Division indeed exists in the family called the Church.

- In the early church there were multiple heresies – one example is the Council of Nicaea which was called for the church to come together in the agreement of truth that we call the Nicene Creed.
- Prior to the Reformation – there were numerous abuses that were rampant in the church – including, but not limited to the selling of indulgences – or the promise of buying your way to heaven.

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- Now – we see the blatant ‘watering down’ of the Gospel – the redefinition of terms – the dissection of Truth – implanting “new and enlightened interpretations.” Utterly Clueless to the Truth!

Take for example the article that appeared a few years ago in the Sydney Morning Herald, about the visit by the retired Episcopal Bishop of Newark – John Shelby Spong - to Australia. The article entitled “An Iconoclast Gathers His Heretical Flock” begins with some of the outlandish beliefs held by **this poor confused man**, so hold onto your hat! He believes that:

- * Jesus was not born of a virgin; yet this man was a bishop!!!
- * His father Joseph was a literary construct, as was Judas;
- * His family thought Jesus was out of his mind;
- * There were probably not 12 disciples;
- * There were NO miraculous healings, no crown of thorns, no tomb, no angel; and last but not least -
- * Jesus did not rise from the dead!

The article continues “He does not believe that God sent Jesus to die for the sins of humankind - the doctrine of the atonement - because that made a victim out of Jesus and made God “the ultimate child abuser.” Rather, the message of Christ was to live fully human lives of love and compassion.” In light of these words, I think you can see what Jesus meant that families would be divided. It is so very important for you to know that with division comes judgment – judgment which falls on the wicked – who are separated from the righteous.

I remember back in August of 2007 – Fox News and NBC News ran a story about a Dutch Roman Catholic bishop who said God should be called Allah. “Allah is a very beautiful word for God. Shouldn’t we all say that from now on we will call God Allah?” Bishop Tiny Muskens said in a broadcast interview “God doesn’t care what we call him.” I am sorry – Bishop Tiny, but God does care what HE is called – and He also cares that we use His name correctly and reverently. God told Moses His name: *"I AM WHO I AM."* He said further, *"Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': **This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.***” (Exodus 3:14-15) There is NO expiration date! In addition, God gave His son *“the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:9-11) How very, very sad this Bishop was and how utterly Clueless – all in the name of political correctness! He passed away in 2013 – and I am sure had to explain himself to Almighty God’s judgement.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus was facing the coming event that would be the crossroads for all of history –of which we commemorate each year during Holy Week. There were signs all around the people that had been foretold by the Prophet Isaiah. **Isaiah 53:5** *“He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us*

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whole, and by his bruises we are healed.” Isaiah 53:12 “He poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” The signs were everywhere - yet the people did not have eyes to see what was coming. The very same might be said for many today.

Because of this sacrificial baptism on the cross, the inevitable result of Christ’s coming would be conflict. Conflict between:

- Christ and the Anti-Christ,
- Conflict between light and darkness,
- And conflict between the children of God and the children of Satan. Have you seen that they are trying in some school districts to have an ‘after school program’ sponsored by the Church of Satan?

We are seeing it folks!

Due to these conflicts – there was indeed confusion – and a certain sense of cluelessness. Jesus was expressing a sense of frustration that people were so good at forecasting the weather – based on clouds that they could see storms coming from the Mediterranean – or when the south wind comes from the Negev – scorching heat will follow. As perceptive as they were to the signs of the weather, the first century Jews did not see this coming – and they paid a precious price – because in 70 AD Rome destroyed the Holy Temple and all of Jerusalem – scattering Jews all over the face of the earth.

Here at St. Andrew’s Anglican Church we are undeniably blessed, in spite of the division and conflicts that surround us – because we believe that we have God’s Holy Word to guide us – to encourage us – and to fill us with His Wisdom and Truth. Take for example the encouragement that we can draw from today’s Epistle to the Hebrews 12:3 *“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”* The first century believers didn’t have the “enlightened scholars” of the last few centuries to challenge or change even one jot or tittle of the Word. They knew only what they had heard, seen and received from eyewitnesses. Jesus endured the ultimate – so that we don’t have to. He is the perfect example of mercy – that we don’t get what we deserve because He gave Himself for us! And despite what we do endure – *“let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:1-2) You see, when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and accept His Holy Word as Truth – then we have the confidence that He is leading our way – despite all obstacles, division or trials. The words of the early church leader and brother of Jesus – James are crystal clear in James 1:2-4 *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

On the night before He died – our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Upper Room, prayed for His church: John 17:17-23 *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me*

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into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." Many of our more 'progressive' or 'liberal' brothers and sisters are always calling for "unity at all costs!" Well, Jesus indeed prayed for unity for His church – but my brothers and sisters let's face it – He didn't do it until Judas had left the building!