

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday, October 9, 2016, Year C

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19

"The Firm Foundation"

What a great day this is! I have something to share about the baptisms in a few moments but first I would like to talk about today's Holy Gospel - the message is an unusual one – in which ten men are given a supernatural healing from the most horrible of skin diseases. I don't have to go into the depths of what leprosy is – you have probably heard and seen enough about it through the years, but it caused a person to become unclean and cast out from friends and relatives; not something that was usually healed. What is unusual about this is that Jesus told them to go and show themselves to a priest as now clean – and only one of the 10 came back to Jesus to tell Him that he was grateful and that he obediently did as Jesus asked. We have no idea about the other nine – but the one, in grateful obedience came back to Jesus to thank Him. It was this foreigner who Jesus told "*Rise and go; your faith has made you well.*" (Luke 17:19)

So let me ask you a question: we have a great deal of experience here in this church today; a lot of different 'life' experiences. We probably have witnessed people who have received a miracle; most certainly a miracle to recover from a disease - an accident - from something. Yet there are some people today that either don't recognize that it is from God – or they don't share the blessing they received by telling others! We witnessed a great deal of God's mercy just this past week during and after this horrible 'Hurricane Matthew.' This community has risen up, like no other community I have personally ever witnessed before, to see pastors of all walks of Christianity; of all colors of Christianity – working together, hand in hand - along with their parishioners – just to make sure that others were taken care of. They were delivering meals to them; preparing meals – taking care of cots and beds and blankets; lots of prayer; volunteers playing with kids – just to make sure that they felt that they were "worth it" – that they were worthy. I know that you have been and will continue to pray for those who evacuated – and somehow found a safe haven in Douglas.

I must share with you what happened on Thursday night as Marilyn and I watched the Weather Channel – hoping and praying for a miracle – for God to spare the First-Coast of Florida; the Gold Coast of Florida – south near Port St. Lucie –Melbourne; and the Space Coast. Close to 11 PM – the forecaster came on and seemed befuddled. He said "I have to show you the track of the storm." "It had all day been following a North Western track – but suddenly started to go north!" The storm was moving away from the shore around Fort Pierce – near Port St. Lucie, south of Melbourne, where our son, John lives. Sure enough the storm stayed on that track going north until early in the morning and then resumed to go North West near Cape Canaveral. This storm as horrendous – but could have been so much worse. John never lost electricity – which to me was a miracle, and Praise God is safe and sound – nobody got hurt and there was no loss of life there. And so – we give thanks and we pray - we indeed recognize and go back to the provider – just as that one man did – we go back to God and say "thank you" for His mercy.

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Somebody said this morning on Facebook because there was a drawing of the coast of Florida, and a hand – the hand of God that was pushing the storm a little bit off the coast. Somebody commented about this picture saying “since when does God control the weather?” Someone else answered with a comment “apparently you know a different God because the God I know created the weather – and controls ALL of it!” I do believe that we escaped some very horrible, horrible possibilities.

Storms are amazing power – and I would like to share some very important words from Jesus that are not in today’s Gospel, but I feel is fitting in light of this awesome celebration of “new life” with the baptism of 5 young children. Please turn to page 1510 of your Pew Bibles – and see the subtitle – The Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-28) *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

Very timely, if you think of the events of the past week; so what does that have to do with Holy Baptism? Let me put it this way – the five families have made a choice – and they are today making promises, along with the godparents, that their house, their children and their lives are built on a foundation that is solid rock! You know what that foundation is? That foundation is our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Word. There is no denying that God wants to lead us to the rock that is higher than I. (Psalm 61:2) *"From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I."* Today I am so proud of the five families that are presenting their children to be a part of the Kingdom of God. That is not a choice that comes lightly – there are promises that the parents and godparents are going to make – and I pray that the children will one day make them when they are Confirmed. It is very important – important promises and you will hear them in just a few moments.

Let me share with you some more Scripture from Luke 18:16 *"Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.""* That Scripture is so important that it is recorded not only in Luke but also in Matthew and Mark. Jesus invited the little children to come – and that is what is happening today.

I want to share with you one more piece of Scripture before I close. From Psalm 18:2 *"The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."* A person asked – “since when does God control weather?” God controls everything! God bless the 5 families who are bringing their children, and presenting them before Almighty God – and saying “lead their lives.”