

A Sermon by the Rev. Canon Jack Frederick Nietert on the Third Sunday after the Epiphany, January 22, 2012 at the Chapel of St. Mark in Port Royal, South Carolina.

The Story of the Life-Saving Station

There was once a dangerous sea coast where shipwrecks often occurred and there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station so that it became famous. Some of those who were saved and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were added and new crews were trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Some of the new members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as a first refuge of those saved from the sea so they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in an enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members and they redecorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely because they used it as a sort of club. Less of the members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions but a life saving motif still prevailed in the club decorations, however. And there was a liturgical life boat in the club where club initiations were held. About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet, half drowned people. They were dirty and sick. The beautiful new club was considerably messed up so the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon life-saving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station but they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the life of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life saving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club and yet another life-saving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself and if you visit that sea coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters but most of the people drown.

— Parable by the Rev. T. O. Wedel
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Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.