
Gridlock and Blessing

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

(excerpts from my sermon of 2 February 2014, [*The Presentation of Gridlock and Blessing*](#))

, There is something far worse than winter, and even worse than traffic jams, that I want to be over. , What I am waiting to finish is the blaming and the scapegoating. Last Wednesday, like many of you, I had the radio or television on, listening to the media analysts and accusers, and I finally got tired of it. I got tired of trying to find fault, trying to place blame, trying to find a scapegoat.

And, I got tired, once again, of people finding fault with the South. For so many people, the South seems to exist only as a convenient scapegoat for all that is wrong with the world. So what; that cannot be our way. It is the way of the world, not God, to place blame elsewhere. The way of the world is to scapegoat someone when something goes wrong. The way of the world is to think that if we can blame someone else, then we will feel a bit better.

Why do we blame? Why does every problem, or every misfortune, have to involve blaming someone else? Gridlock happens in this life. But when gridlock occurs, the only way out is to bless. When gridlock occurs in this life, we can choose to blame or to bless. Blame produces more gridlock. Blessing is the only way out.

, During the icy gridlock of Atlanta last week, I thought of a particular biblical character, a rather unknown one[™]one who couldn't drive very well. But he was driving a donkey. In fact, his donkey, his transportation, kept sliding off the road and running into things. I am talking about the delightful character, Balaam, whose story is described in Numbers, chapter 22.

Balaam, a local prophet, had been sent out to do a job; he had been hired to curse the Israelites. And so he left on his commute. But his donkey got stuck in a series of gridlocks. In the first accident, his donkey slid off the road into a field. Balaam got the donkey going again, but then the donkey slammed into a rock restraining wall. Balaam got the donkey cranked up again and headed back into the road. But at the third time, the donkey just quit altogether and lay down under Balaam, like a car at a complete standstill on I-285.

What was wrong? What was wrong was that Balaam thought he had been sent out to curse. It turned out that Balaam had actually been sent out by God to bless! To bless Israel, rather than curse! It was an angel that was turning Balaam's job to blessing.

, Little did we know last Tuesday afternoon, whatever we were doing, we were not being sent out in our cars to curse or to find blame. At our places of work, we were not there simply to make a bigger profit and cut costs. We were not going home just to escape the tribulations of the world. We were not speaking just to make ourselves look good. No matter where we were last Tuesday and Wednesday, we were there to bless.

We Christians are sent out into the world, not to blame but to bless. We are sent out not to curse, but to save. The ultimate

gridlock is to go out into the world looking for someone to blame. The ultimate freedom, the ultimate release, is to bless.
May our blessing be a light to the nations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
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