

Devotional Reflection, Monday November 18, 2024
Proper 28, the week of the twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Paying Attention to What We Know

Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:

19 'There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 23In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. . . .29Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." 30He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." 31He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."'

You will find the full text of this Gospel reading at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (BCP, 993)

AM Psalm 89:1-18; PM Psalm 89:19-52

Hab. 2:1-4,9-20; James 2:14-26; Luke 16:19-31

Today we celebrate the Feast of Hilda of Whitby. (See below.)

David's Reflections

The concept of eternal separation from God lies behind this parable, like a tapestry hanging as a backdrop behind a stage. A study of contemporary Jewish literature reveals that Jesus was drawing on a popular image of the intermediate state of people after death, where the abodes of the righteous and of the unrighteous were contiguous. Their final state, after resurrection and judgment, does not come into view here. We cannot use this story as a proof text to prove that Jesus believed in a

hell with literal fire. The point of his story lies elsewhere, with the images of hell serving as backdrop.

Even if Jesus refers to a popular notion for purposes of telling his parable, it would be difficult to imagine his telling a parable like this had he not believed that lack of faith put people eternally at risk. For him to draw on these popular images while himself not believing that people are eternally at risk without faith would involve a serious breach of integrity. I prefer to wrestle with this dilemma rather than assign the parable to the earliest church's creativity, as some biblical scholars do. Such a move only applies my theological filter to the biblical materials. And, it assumes the earliest church must have missed Jesus on this point.

The thrust of this parable lies elsewhere. The wealthy man had ignored this beggar while hosting lavish festal meals regularly. Lazarus did not even get the left overs from the table afterwards. Such behavior clearly violated the teachings of the Scriptures this man knew only too well as a pious follower of the Jewish faith. (See Isaiah 58:6-7 for example).

Someone has observed that to celebrate every day put the man out of synch with his environment. His context, as does ours, provides ample occasion for grieving and lamenting. The beggar's plight did not awaken such responses in him—another hint about the dearth of his spiritual experience, his inability to connect with the desperately poor and grieve their plight.

Abraham's response to his request for Lazarus to alert his brothers sounds harsh at first glance. But, behind Abraham's words, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them," lies the rich man's indictment. He had Moses and the prophets and he did not hear them. His judgment is warranted. He did not err through ignorance but through blindness and inattention to what he already knew. His brothers were in the same position. They knew what their faith required but obviously, like the rich man, they were ignoring those teachings.

In this parable Jesus challenged his hearers, and us by extension, to pay close attention to the teachings we already have about loving our neighbor and showing compassion to the outcast and poor. We can hear this text as individuals and as communities of faith. A community of faith lacking compassion for the poor and

marginalized lives outside the Spirit and will suffer serious consequences in its corporate life. Grieving the suffering in our context means we are in synch with the Spirit. We have Moses and the prophets and Jesus. Let us hear them.

Collect of the Day, Proper 28, the twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 236)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Hilda of Whitby, abbess and peacemaker (died 17 Nov 680 CE)

http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Hilda_Whitby.htm

<https://etc.worldhistory.org/education/hilda-of-whitby-susan-abernethy/>

Collect of the Feast of the Ordination of Samuel Seabury

We give you thanks, O Lord our God, for your goodness in bestowing upon this church the gift of the episcopate; and we pray that, joined together in unity with our bishops and nourished by your holy sacraments, we may proclaim the Gospel of redemption with apostolic zeal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for the Renewal of Life

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness while it was day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 99)

Of the Incarnation

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 252)

A Prayer for Light

Almighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us, as daylight fades, with the brightness of the vesper light; and we implore you of your great mercy that, as you enfold us with the radiance of this light, so you would shine into our hearts the brightness of your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 110)

A Collect for Mission

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 100, 257)

Daily Office Gospel, Luke 16:19-31

19 ‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 23In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. 24He called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.” 25But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.” 27He said, “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— 28for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.” 29Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.” 30He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” 31He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.””

Daily Prayer Offices in The Book of Common Prayer

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *Book of Common Prayer*

Noonday Prayer, p. 103, *Book of Common Prayer*

Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p. 109, *Book of Common Prayer*

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*

Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*