

Devotional Reflection, Monday, November 25, 2024
Proper 29, the week of the last Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Responding to Failure With Gentleness

Key phrases for reflection from today's epistle reading:

6:1 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill* the law of Christ.

(You will find the full text of today's epistle reading at the end of this reflection.)

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (BCP, 995)

AM Psalm 106:1-18; PM Psalm 106:19-48

Zech. 10:1-12; Gal. 6:1-10; Luke 18:15-30

Today we celebrate the Feast of James O. S. Huntington. (See below.)

David's Reflections

Buddy Stall describes the process by which prehistoric Indians in Louisiana cooked. He says they "cooked by the process of stone boiling. This was accomplished by using a deerskin with its edges held up by stakes so that it sagged in the center. It was then filled with water and meat; hot clay balls were placed in the water. After many clay balls were inserted over a long period of time (depending on the amount of meat), the meat was finally cooked." *

Today's epistle begins and ends with the same note—those with whom we share the Christian community experience are to receive the most intense focus of love and care possible. As Christ bore our burdens in life, death, and resurrection, so we are to bear each other's. Or, to borrow Stall's image, we are like those clay balls in the cooking mix—we depend on each other's spiritual and emotional energy to thrive.

Do you not find it most encouraging that our first response to the failure of another in the community is to be one of encouragement, one of seeking to restore the fallen person to their former place in the community's life? How often have you seen the opposite take place. Someone fails. People begin to talk. They begin to find

fault and to blame. The emotional atmosphere in the community becomes so toxic that the failed person dare not return. And, no serious effort gets made to restore them. Perhaps an occasional “we miss you,” but not much more.

We are to take care that we ourselves are not tempted. Today it may be the other person who needs my prayers, and my efforts to restore them. Tomorrow, I may need theirs. The failure of another is to provoke, not negative faultfinding, but a sober realization of my own vulnerability. That could be me out there. What would I want others to do and say were it I who had failed and required restoration? I certainly would want to be remembered, valued, and sought.

Our responses to one another are to follow the template of Jesus’ response to us—gentle, persistent efforts to restore bathed in kindness and self-reflection. Imagine your community woven more tightly together by the chords of failure redeemed and kindness and gentleness overcoming the human frailties that could tatter that garment of community.

* Gasper J. ("Buddy") Stall, *Buddy Stall's Louisiana Potpourri*. (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 1991), p. 31.

Collect of the Day, Proper 29, the week of the last Sunday after Pentecost

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*. (BCP, 236)

Today we celebrate the Feast of James O. S. Huntington, priest and monastic (died 28 June 1935 CE).

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

<https://www.allsaintstacoma.org/2024/10/james-otis-sargent-huntington-priest-and-monk-1935/>

Collect of the Feast of James O. S. Huntington

Preserve your people, O God, from discouragement in the face of adversity, as you did your servant James Huntington, knowing that when you have begun a good work you will bring it to completion. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and 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 Epistle, Galatians 6:1-10

6:1 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill* the law of Christ. 3 For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4 All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. 5 For all must carry their own loads.

6 Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. 8 If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9 So let us not grow weary in doing

what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. 10So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

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*