Daily Office Devotional, Thursday, July 30, 2026
Proper 12, the week of the ninth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Transcending the Stereotypes

Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:
55Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. 56Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

You will find the full text today's Gospel at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (*BCP*, 977)
AM Psalm [70], 71; PM Psalm 74
Judges 4:4-23; Acts 1:15-26; Matt. 27:55-66

Today we celebrate the Feast of William Wilberforce. (See below.)

David's Reflections

You may have heard about Plennie Wingo, the restauranteur whose eatery in Abilene, Texas failed during the Great Depression. He was one of many who resorted to stunts to make money. He procured sunglasses with side mirrors, used by cyclists, and proceeded an attempt to walk backwards across the world; he was ultimately not entirely successful and settled for walking backwards across America. He walked backwards from Fort Worth to Boston, where he sailed to Germany and walked backwards to Istanbul, Turkey, before authorities arrested him. He returned to America and walked backwards from California back to Fort Worth. He wore out twelve pairs of shoes and had four dollars when he got home. I saw him interviewed on The Tonight Show in 1975, wearing his mirrored glasses. +

His stunt afforded a great view of where he had been and only a reflection to guide him to where he was going. Had he followed Jesus' example, he might have

worn the sunglasses but walked forward, facing where he was going, and with the reflections to tell him where he had been.

The opening verses of today's reading have parallel versions in Mark 15 and Luke 8. Jesus' travel entourage included several women, some of financial means, who supported Jesus' ministry. It was not unusual for women to support financially a rabbi, but to leave home and travel with a teacher, as did these women would have been at the least unusual and at the most scandalous. Jesus' welcoming them in this very nontraditional role was consistent with his practice entire, one of receiving and treating women with a degree of equality and hospitality unprecedented in his day.

To put it another way, Jesus behaved in a way not stereotypical with regard to women. The word stereotype comes from two Greek words. The word steroid comes from the same root, a word for firm or strong. The word *typos* in Greek means form or example. A stereotype is a strong or firm form, a preconceived notion of the way reality should operate.

Jesus' resisted conformity to create new realities. No better place exists for testing those strategies than in the formation of a new church or the redevelopment of an existing one. We have the freedom to sail where the wind of the Spirit blows, even if it's off the established shipping lanes. That freedom can be exercised about the form of our ministry, about our worship, and about our ways of receiving and ministering to people.

The example of Jesus' nontraditional ways should always give us pause about getting locked into old ways of doing ministry and old values and attitudes about people. The prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures were called "seers," because of their visionary experiences. Jesus continued that prophetic spirit in his own visionary life and ministry. May we function like prophetic seers as a community, especially in the way we treat women and others our culture treats with less than total dignity.

Looking back for guidance about the future can lock us into a past-oriented view of reality, reminiscent of Plennie Wingo's walk. Living through the COVID 19 pandemic intensified our longing for a return to "normal," to restoring the past. Yet, our future now seems indelibly overwritten by the COVID experience; we face the challenge of envisioning new ways of being in the world and of doing ministry, with

the learnings of the pandemic as a treasure trove of resources. Looking forward, with a reflective perspective about the past, will enhance a future-oriented view of reality that can anticipate and pro-act with new possibilities and avoid stereotyped values. Let's walk forward and use the mirrors for looking back.

> Wallace Alston put it quite well in a journal article on Genesis 18.
> *God . . . can be trusted to create a new future out of nothing and bring into being that which does not exist. . . . It might encourage a congregation to stand in awe and gratitude before God's steadfast love, which is always beforehand with us, anticipates our need, refuses to give up on us, and promises us a future filled with impossibilities that are absolutely too good to be false.#*

+https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/weekly-standard/the-man-who-walked-backward-review-the-retropedestrian

#Wallace M. Alston, Jr. "Genesis 18:1-11." *Interpretation* 42 (Oct 88):402.

Collect of the Day, Proper 12, the ninthSunday after Pentecost
O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP, 231)

Today we celebrate the Feast of William Wilberforce, social reformer (died 29 July 1833 CE).
http://satucket.com/lectionary/William_Wilberforce.htm
https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Wilberforce

Collect of the Feast of William Wilberforce
Let your continual mercy, O Lord, kindle in your Church the never-failing gift of love; that, following the example of your servant William Wilberforce, we may have grace to defend the poor, and maintain the cause of those who have no helper; for the sake of him who gave his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Protection
O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night. Bring us in safety to the morning hours; through him who died and rose again for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 124)

For a child not yet baptized
O eternal God, you have promised to be a father to a thousand generations of those who love and fear you: Bless this child and preserve his/her life; receive and enable *him* to receive you, that through the Sacrament of Baptism *he* may become the child of God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 444)

In the Evening
O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. ***Amen***. (BCP, 833)

A Collect for Mission
Merciful God, creator of all the peoples of the earth and lover of souls: Have compassion on all who do not know you as you are revealed in your Son Jesus Christ; let your Gospel be preached with grace and power to those who have not heard it; turn the hearts of those who resist it; and bring home to your fold those who have gone astray; that there may be one flock under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*. (BCP, 280)

<u>Daily Office Gospel, Matthew 27:55-66</u>
55Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. 56Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. 58He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock.

He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. 61Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. 62The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63and said, 'Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise again." 64Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, "He has been raised from the dead," and the last deception would be worse than the first.' 65Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.' 66So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer

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