

Daily Prayer

William Wilberforce

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer to God our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we remember William Wilberforce, Social Reformer, 1833.

We begin by saying

Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.

Deuteronomy 15.11

The First Reading

Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.'

If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and works for you for six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free. And when you send a male slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing-floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the LORD your God has blessed you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today.

Deuteronomy 15.10-15

The Psalm

Give the king your justice, O God, *
and your righteousness to the king's son;
That he may rule your people righteously *
and the poor with justice;
That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, *
and the little hills bring righteousness.
He shall defend the needy among the people; *
he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.
He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, *
from one generation to another.
He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, *
like showers that water the earth.
In his time shall the righteous flourish; *
there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be
no more.
For he shall deliver the poor who cries out in distress, *
and the oppressed who has no helper.
He shall have pity on the lowly and poor; *
he shall preserve the lives of the needy.
He shall redeem their lives from oppression and violence, *
and dear shall their blood be in his sight.

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Psalm 72.1-7, 12-14

The Gospel Reading

We continue with the gospel reading and the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the readings have to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25.31-40

The Reflection

Steven Mackison

William Wilberforce was born in Kingston upon Hull in England in 1759 to a family of wealthy merchants. He was of ill health during his youth, but grew stronger in his adolescence. As a young man at age 17, members of his extended family died, leaving him great wealth. He then went on to attend Cambridge University where his affluence made him popular and where he formed many lasting friendships – including William Pitt who was to become the future

Prime Minister of England. It was Pitt who convinced Wilberforce to go into politics.

At the age of 21, Wilberforce won a seat in his home borough of Kingston upon Hull and sat as an independent because he was determined not to wed himself politically with either the Tories or the Whigs. In this he was influenced by his conscience and the strength of his Christian convictions. Then in 1783 when Pitt became Prime Minister, contrary to the expectations of many, Wilberforce was not offered a seat in cabinet by his friend; he resolved to remain true to his conscience.

In 1784 Wilberforce went on an extended tour of Europe to discern his vocation further. He committed himself to a discipline of rising early each day to read scripture. This led him to a conversion experience, where he more deeply embraced the Gospel, especially though Jesus' call to minister to the marginalized. He returned to England to grapple with the decision to remain in politics or seek to serve his God in other ways, considering ordained ministry as a potential alternative.

In his discernment, he sought guidance from John Newton, a former ship captain turned Anglican priest and author of the hymn "Amazing Grace." Newton convinced Wilberforce that his gifts and talents could be best used by God in the public sphere and that one needn't be a priest or missionary to serve God. Thus, he returned to politics, fueled by his zeal for the Gospel. This passion soon found its home in the Abolitionist Movement.

Britain had been actively engaged in the slave trade since the 16th century and had established itself as the leader in developing the economic and social machinery that drove it. African slaves were sold in the West Indies to produce crops of tobacco, cotton and sugar – which were then transported back to England. This

provided the crown with 80% of its income from foreign markets, which no doubt influenced the reticence to embrace the Abolitionist Movement, despite growing awareness of the atrocities committed against slaves – not merely in violation of their liberties, but to their very lives. It is estimated that of the 11 million Africans transported in the slave trade, about 1.4 million died before they reached their destination. Many more perished soon after their arrival or experienced lives that were harsh, brutal, and short. Slowly England woke to the privation and injustice of the Slave trade and the Abolitionist Movements gained momentum in the mid eighteenth century.

Wilberforce put his faith into action and increasingly spoke out against the slave trade. As he wrote in his journey in 1787: “God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners.” He brought his ardor and eloquence to Parliament, introducing legislation over the course of his remaining 18 years in public life. Wilberforce died three days after the introduction of the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery. He followed his Christian convictions in his life and work and as a result, one month after his death, the House of Lords formally abolished slavery in the British Empire in August of 1834, making dominions like Canada a safe haven for American slaves escaping the south.

In the life and witness of William Wilberforce, and throughout the readings appointed for this day, we see the fruits of Jesus’ two commandments at work: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” and “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” It was wedding his passion for God and his love of neighbour – as self – that inspired Wilberforce to dedicate his public life and his private piety to the cause of the Abolishment Movement. It is no surprise therefore, that the Gospel

appointed for this feast should follow so closely on the heels of Jesus' command to love God and neighbour fully.

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." And the king will answer "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

In the age and time of "Black Lives Matter" and our growing awareness of other groups that are marginalized and oppressed, we too are called to follow those great commandments; for in loving God with our whole heart and our neighbour as ourselves, all injustices and inequities are laid bare. We follow these commandments, we pursue the justice that faithful adherence to them reveals, not just by making promises, but by seeing them through to their fulfillment. As we pledge in our baptismal covenant: we "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being." As Wilberforce discovered through his own life and witness: the time for keeping that promise is always now. Amen. +

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ A Song of the Word of the Lord

Seek the Lord while he may be found, ♦
call upon him while he is near;

Let the wicked abandon their ways, ♦
and the unrighteous their thoughts;

Return to the Lord, who will have mercy; ♦
to our God, who will richly pardon.

'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, ♦
neither are your ways my ways,' says the Lord.
'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ♦
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
'As the rain and the snow come down from above, ♦
and return not again but water the earth,
'Bringing forth life and giving growth, ♦
seed for sowing and bread to eat,
'So is my word that goes forth from my mouth; ♦
it will not return to me fruitless,
'But it will accomplish that which I purpose, ♦
and succeed in the task I gave it.'

Isaiah 55.6-11

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions)
and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

The Intercessions

We pray for God's grace.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

Lord God, through your grace we are your people:
through your Son you have redeemed us;
in your Spirit you have made us your own.

We pray for ... (the Church)

Make our hearts respond to your love.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

We pray for ... (*the world*)

Make our lives bear witness to your glory in the world.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

We pray for ... (*the sick and those in need*)

Make our wills eager to obey, and our hands ready to heal.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for ...

Make our voices one with all your people in heaven and on earth.

We conclude our prayers

O God, the Source of life and liberty,

let your bountiful mercy

continually renew in your Church

the never-failing gift of love,

that following your servant William Wilberforce,

we may have grace

to redeemer the needy from oppression

and power to maintain

the cause of those who have no helper;

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. Amen.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

We conclude

May God grant to the world justice, truth and peace. Amen.
Alleluia.

Credits:

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