

Daily Prayer

Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

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 our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys—and remember Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, 988.

We begin by saying

He was honoured in his generation,
and was the pride of his time.

Cf. Sirach 44.7

The First Reading

Let us now sing the praises of famous men,
our ancestors in their generations.
The Lord apportioned to them great glory,
his majesty from the beginning.
There were those who ruled in their kingdoms,
and made a name for themselves by their valour;
those who gave counsel because they were intelligent;
those who spoke in prophetic oracles;
those who led the people by their counsels
and by their knowledge of the people's lore;
they were wise in their words of instruction;
those who composed musical tunes,
or put verses in writing;
rich men endowed with resources,
living peacefully in their homes—
all these were honoured in their generations,
and were the pride of their times.

Sirach 44.1-7

The Psalm

One thing have I asked of the Lord;
one thing I seek; *

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days
of my life;

To behold the fair beauty of the Lord *
and to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble he shall keep me safe
in his shelter; *

he shall hide me in the secrecy of his dwelling
and set me high upon a rock.

Even now he lifts up my head *
above my enemies round about me.

Therefore I will offer in his dwelling an oblation
with sounds of great gladness; *

I will sing and make music to the Lord.

Hearken to my voice, O Lord, when I call; *
have mercy on me and answer me.

You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face." *
Your face, Lord, will I seek.

Hide not your face from me, *
nor turn away your servant in displeasure.

Psalm 27.5-12

The Gospel Reading

'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!'

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 7.24-29

We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has 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?

The Reflection

Steven Mackison

Dunstan was one of the most important Archbishops of Canterbury in the period leading up to the Norman invasion of England in 1066, serving in Canterbury from 960 until his death in 988. He was born to a wealthy family and seemed destined for high political office. However, rather suddenly, Dunstan deviated from his secular path and took sacred vows and holy orders, thus committing himself to the life of a monk and priest. Throughout his long career in the church he showed himself to be a reformer, a liturgist, an artist; eventually becoming a celebrated patron of the arts. He held many important and celebrated posts in the church, including Abbot of Glastonbury, Bishop of Worcester, London, until he was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 960. With such a

distinguished “career” it is small wonder that the reading from Sirach, lauding the lives of the famous should be party of our celebration of this worthy Saint.

Sirach suggests that achievement is worth celebrating in and of itself. This should not surprise us in a text that takes it for granted that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God.

Accomplishments are signs and tokens of the essential character of all of us as created co-creators; as those whose powers of understanding and creativity mirror and give voice to the truth and wonder of the world that God created. Moreover, Sirach suggests that the achievements of individuals cannot be understood as merely individual accomplishments. In some sense they belong to and reflect back on the wider community. The heroes that Sirach speaks of were, “the pride of their times”, and earlier in the chapter Sirach speaks of them as “the fathers of our people,” not literally, but in the sense that their achievements have shaped the identity of the people of God. In other words, we are who we are - at least in part - because of the achievements (and also sadly the failures) of those who have gone before us. Lastly, Sirach tells us that achievements are also gifts. We did not create ourselves, nor do we fashion the opportunities that God places in our path. So much of what shapes who we are, comes to us as given. We were placed in a certain body, in a particular place, in a specific time in history. So the achievements Sirach is speaking of are meant to be seen as a reflection of the work of God in our lives. And our lives, moreover, are meant to glorify the giver, God. But as much as Dunstan’s accomplishments are worthy of celebration, it is his faith that the church raises up in reverence to this saint.

Unsurprisingly, Matthew’s Gospel serves as the ground for illuminating the profound faith that shaped Dunstan’s life. Like the

man who built his house on rock in this parable, the foundation of all Dunstan's works was his unshakeable faith. This was put to the test, as pious legend tells us in Dunstan's contest with the devil.

The story goes that, as an act of devotion, Dunstan entered his cell in the monastery and secluded himself for forty days and forty nights – neither seeing nor speaking to anyone. On the last day the Devil entered and said “You have been here forty days and forty nights and have neither seen nor heard from God. How can you have faith? Why your faith is nothing more than believing what you know can not possibly be true.”

To this Dunstan replied “It is not that I see and hear the presence of God and so come to believe, rather I believe in order that my eyes and ears may be opened to the God whose voice and presence was there even in the midst of my deafness and blindness.”

This illustrates yet another reason why we applaud Dunstan's witness; though an accomplished church dignitary, with a long list of accomplishments, he was, at heart, a true believer, who desired only to hear God's will for him and see clearly the path that God had chosen for him.

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

The Canticle ~ A Song of the Lord's Anointed

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ♦
because he has anointed me.

He has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, ♦
to bind up the broken-hearted,

To proclaim liberty to the captives, ♦
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, ♦
to comfort all who mourn,
To give them a garland instead of ashes, ♦
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit,
That they may be called oaks of righteousness, ♦
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
For as the earth puts forth her blossom, ♦
and as seeds in the garden spring up,
So shall the Lord God make righteousness and praise ♦
blossom before all the nations.
You shall be called priests of the Lord; ♦
they shall speak of you as ministers of our God.

Isaiah 61.1-3, 11, 6a

*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

Let us pray to God of creation.

God said, 'Let there be light.'

Eternal God, we thank you for your light and your truth.

We praise you for your tender care

in creating a universe which proclaims your glory.

Inspire us to worship you, the creator of all,

and let your light shine upon our world.

God of life:

hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the heavens.'

We thank you for the vastness of the universe
and the mysteries of space.

We pray for all scientists and astronomers
who extend the boundaries of our knowledge.

As we contemplate the wonder of the heavens,
confirm us in the truth that every human being is
known and loved by you.

God of life:

hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let the waters be gathered together,
and let dry land appear.'

We thank you for the beauty of the earth,
for the diversity of land and sea,
for the resources of the earth.

Give us the will to cherish this planet
and to use its riches for the good and welfare of all.

God of life:

hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let there be lights in the sky
to separate the day and the night.'

We thank you for the warmth of the sun,
the light of the moon, the glory of the stars.
We praise you for the formations of clouds,
the radiance of dawn and sunset.

Save us from wasting or abusing the energy
on which all life depends.

Open our eyes to behold your beauty,
and our lips to praise your name.

God of life:

hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let the waters bring forth living creatures,
and let birds fly across the sky.'

We thank you for the teeming life of the seas,
and the flight of the birds.

Help us to protect the environment
so that all life may flourish.

God of life:

hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind.'

We rejoice in the variety of animal life.

Grant us grace to treat all animals with respect and care;
to protect endangered species,
to preserve the variety of habitats,
and to honour the delicate balance of nature.

God of life:

hear our prayer.

God said, 'Let us create human beings in our own image.'

We pray for the human family.

We exult in its diversity and giftedness,
we repent of its sins, divisions and violence.

By the power of your Spirit, restore your image within us,
through Christ who came to remake us
by his death and resurrection.

God of life:

hear our prayer.

Holy One, you have filled the world with beauty:
open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works;
that, rejoicing in your whole creation,
we may learn to serve you with gladness;
for the sake of him through whom all things were made,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayers conclude

O God,
you raised up your servant Dunstan
to renew the Church of the English
in the manifold beauty of holiness.
Teach us to follow his example
that we, finding our order and beauty in you,
may enrich the life of your people
in their loving worship of your Name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[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.

Credits:

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