

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Whiterocks

Dear St. Elizabeth's Family,

November 11, 2021

Let's turn back the clock six hundred years and picture ourselves in London. People spoke English, pretty much like we do today, but going to church was an entirely different experience. Though the communion service was similar to ours, the words were all in Latin. Imagine going to church on Sunday and not understanding a single word of the prayers!

Even more shocking was reading Scripture in a foreign language. How could people possibly follow the stories or understand the teachings that way? By then the Bible had been translated into English, and the printing press made it affordable for ordinary people. Just as the Roman Catholics was trying to stamp out innovations like that, the Church of England separated from Rome, eventually giving birth to the Episcopal Church in America.

We take for granted the prayer books in the pews at church (or the ones we have at home), but they were very controversial at first. Bishops were killed for writing the first ones, but that didn't stop the movement: it was clear that people needed to pray and read Scripture in their own language.

This was important because the reformers believed that reading the Bible could transform peoples' lives, bringing them closer to God. The special prayer for this Sunday was written in the 1500's, encouraging us in our Bible reading: *"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..."* (BCP p. 236)

Here are some observations about that prayer:

1. Holy Scripture is the Word of God, "caused to be written for our learning." There are many great spiritual and educational books, but the Bible is different. Its writers were guided by God.
2. The prayer lists four things we need to do with Scripture, and the first is to read it. The Bible can't change our lives when it's sitting on the bookshelf.
3. As the list goes on, it's clear that reading Scripture is not like a mystery novel, where we can't wait to get to the ending. We need to move slowly through the Bible, marking important passages and taking time to digest them.
4. Finally, there's a purpose in doing this: to remember that we'll always belong to God, giving us hope beyond our days on earth.

Let's not take for granted how easy it is for us to pick up a contemporary, English-language Bible. This 500-year-old prayer reminds us how blessed we are to be able to hear God's word so clearly.

Michael+

Gathering in Our Hearts

Prayer 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 during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

from Psalm 104

Bless the LORD, O my soul; * O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness!
you are clothed with majesty and splendor.

You wrap yourself with light as with a cloak *
and spread out the heavens like a curtain.

You lay the beams of your chambers in the waters above; *
you make the clouds your chariot; you ride on the wings of the wind.

You make the winds your messengers *
and flames of fire your servants.

You have set the earth upon its foundations, *
so that it never shall move at any time.

O LORD, how manifold are your works! * in wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures. Hallelujah!

Reflection

Confessions of a spiritual couch potato: it is hard to practice what you preach. I may be able to describe a wonderful spiritual life, but living one is easier said than done. It takes some of the old-fashioned virtues like discipline, humility, and perseverance. In an age when instant gratification is the norm following a path that requires sacrifice, sharing and equality is not always popular. So whenever I am tempted to talk the talk I remind myself about getting off the couch to walk the walk. I exercise my faith. I put down the remote control and pick up the tools for building community. I do what I can, when I can, how I can, to move one step closer to the promise of what I believe.

Episcopal Bishop Steven Charleston, Choctaw nation

Remember those among us who are in need of prayer. We give thanks for the changing seasons and pray for all who are cold or hungry. In our church family, we remember Amanda, Julia, Arick, Leo, SueAnn, Dave & Nora, Rodricka, Ina Jane, Peggy and Reuban, and those who have died, especially Felita Black. We pray for first responders and medical workers, those from our reservation serving in the Armed Forces and for all veterans. We say the **Lord's Prayer** out loud.

Prayer for Veterans

Almighty God, we honor our veterans, worthy men and women who gave their best when they were called upon to serve and protect their country. We give thanks for their unselfish service in the continual struggle to preserve our freedoms, our safety and our country's heritage. Gather into your loving arms the veterans who gave their lives for us, and let their families be comforted by our appreciation of their sacrifice. All this we pray in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessing

Keep me, O Christ, in a love that is tender,
Keep me, O Christ, in a love that is true,
Keep me, O Christ, in a love that is strong,
Today, tonight, and always. *John Philip Newell*

***If you can, join us for in-person worship at St. Elizabeth's on Sundays at 10:00 am.
You can also look for prayers and a spiritual message on Michael Carney's Facebook page.***