

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to morning prayers at the Memorial Church. I invite you please to rise and join in reading our responsorial Psalm, which is Psalm 30 in the Psalter on page 15.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I will exalt you, O God, because you have lifted me up and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

Congregation:

O Lord my God, I cried out to you and you restored me to health.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

For divine wrath endures, but the twinkling of an eye, divine favor for a lifetime.

Congregation:

Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

While I felt secure, I said, "I shall never be disturbed." You, O God, with your favor made me as strong as the mountains.

Congregation:

Then you hid your face, and I was filled with fear.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

I cried to you, O God. I pleaded with you saying...

Congregation:

What profit is there in my blood, if I go down into the pit? Will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Hear, O God, and have mercy upon me. O God, be my helper.

Congregation:

You have turned my wailing into dancing. You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Therefore, my heart sings to you without ceasing, O God, my God. I will give you thanks forever.

Choir:

(singing).

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

This is a reading from the Gospel according to Saint John from the 12th chapter, beginning at the 44th verse.

Then Jesus cried aloud, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me, sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge. On the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me." Here endeth the lesson.

Today is the Feast day of the Bible translator and martyr William Tyndale. Tyndale was a reformer, and he lived during the English Reformation. He was born in 1494 in Gloucestershire, went to Oxford, and proved himself a gifted linguist there. He learned French, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, Latin, and Italian, and then went to Cambridge, the other Cambridge.

He became really committed to translating the Bible into English. The Reformation was happening in on the continent in Germany and putting the Holy Word into the language of his people became an important passion of his. There had been translations of the Bible, partial translations of the Bible into English since the seventh century, but with a previous Reformation minded priest named John Wycliffe, he had a translation of the Bible.

And because of what was going on in the continent, English Bibles had been outlawed. English translations had been outlawed in English, excuse me, in England. And possession of any portion of translated Scripture was punishable by death at this time.

Tyndale went back to Gloucestershire and started teaching, working as a tutor, and getting into arguments with local clergy. There's one famous argument, which is accounted in George Foxe's Book of Martyrs, where he's arguing with another cleric, and the other clerk said, "We had better be without God's law than the Pope's."

Not the right thing to say to a reformer. Tyndale responded, "I defy the Pope and all his laws, and if God spares my life, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the Holy Scriptures than you."

He sought permission from a Bishop to translate the New Testament. This was denied, so we went to Wittenberg. In 1524, this is within a decade of the 95 theses being tacked to the door in Wittenberg. In 1526, he had produced this New Testament, and with the new printing technology they produced 18,000 copies and smuggled them to England.

The translation was immediately condemned and publicly burned. Two copies survive today. Tyndale went into hiding in Hamburg. There he started working on the Hebrew scriptures. He translated the first five books of Moses, the Pentateuch. He translated the book of Jonah and everything from Joshua to Second Chronicles.

He was really busy, but then he was betrayed to the Holy Roman Empire. He was seized in Antwerp in 1535, imprisoned near Brussels, tried and condemned for heresy in 1536, tied to a stake, strangled, and

then his dead body set on fire. His last words it said while he was being strangled were, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." Within four years, King Henry VIII himself had commissioned four English Bibles.

We take it sort of as expected that the Bible ought to be translated into the language of the people reading. There's really no dispute about this among Christian peoples today.

And we're thankful for folks like Tyndale, who sacrificed themselves, and gave everything of themselves for the sake of this work of translation, this scholarly work, this evangelical work.

But there are also issues of translation today. We have the Bible in English. Those of us who speak English. We have the Bible in many languages. Translating it from Hebrew and Greek into our own language is one thing, but there are other and more important, and I think crucial challenges to translation.

How do we take the Good News that was spoken 2000 years ago and make it legible to people today? We can think about this in a broad sense, but also in a narrow sense. I just last night, final period on this book I'm writing about forgiveness. What did forgiveness mean, this Greek word, *aphiemi*, which we translate is forgiveness? What did that mean to folks 2000 years ago? What was at stake in that concept? How can we lift up what was at stake in it and make it relevant to people today? And does the word, the English word forgiveness, carry any of that complexity and meaning?

So much is lost in translation. And the work of translation is important because it begins the conversation, but it is a beginning because we have to figure out a way to recover all that which has been lost, and deliver it to folks who need to hear good news.

This Gospel passage today comes from the Gospel of John. Some of the first words of the Gospel of John, the word was made flesh and lived among us. I think that phrase from that anthem the word was made flesh is a part of our answer because this statement Jesus makes when he cries out to the crowds happens on Palm Sunday after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Jesus is just about to die, and there's a moment from Jesus's death, which is unique to the Gospel of John. Jesus looks from the cross down at his mother and the disciple whom he loves. That disciples never named in the Gospel of John.

The disciple whom he loves is you. He looks down from the cross at his mother and the disciple whom he loves, and Jesus says to his mother, "Woman, there is your son," and to the disciple "Son, there is your mother." He gives himself, gives his word, gives his ministry to them. The word was made flesh and lived among us. And now we have these words leftover and they are given to us.

There is great risk in taking up these words. We have done awful things with them. We have murdered men like William Tyndale. But the fact that making Christ's words flesh with our own lives is risky doesn't absolve us of the responsibility to live those words and to make them good news for the world. The word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

I invite you please to rise for the prayers. The Lord be with you.

Congregation:

And hear our prayers.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us pray. Reveal to us thy saving word, oh God, that like thy servant William Tyndale, we might hear it's called to repentance and new life. Plant in our hearts that same consuming passion to bring the Scriptures to all people in their native language and a strength to endure amidst all obstacles through

Jesus Christ our Lord who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God forever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And now we pray in the words Jesus taught us saying our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Please join now and singing hymn 238.

Congregation:

(singing)

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation in the church, and to Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.