

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

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The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

Welcome to Morning Prayers here in the Appleton Chapel of the Memorial Church. I invite you, please, to rise and join in our responsorial psalm this morning, which is Psalm 1 in your black Harvard psalter.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Congregation:

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Congregation:

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Congregation:

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Choir:

(Singing).

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

This is a reading from the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, beginning at the 26th verse. "Jesus also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."" Here ends the lesson.

Today is the feast day of David of Wales. That's why we have such lovely Welsh music this morning. Those of you who attend this service with some regularity know that I show some, let's say, irreverence towards the saintly traditions, sometimes. I will tread carefully today, lest I run afoul of our Welsh music director. And with apologies for all my Welsh pronunciations going forward, although the choir did great with that. The fellows did great with that this morning.

David was born in the late 400s or early 500s in Wales and died in the late 500s, so he's an ancient saint about whom we know very little. The record from which we take most of what we know about David comes from the late 1100s, so you can do the math, six or 700 years between the stories told about him and his life. And that record was written by a man named Rhygyfarch, who was, at the time, trying to get an archbishop placed in Wales, and so he was telling some stories about how great Wales and Welsh people were. One of the stories involved David traveling from Wales to Jerusalem where he was made an archbishop by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and so he said it was only natural that Wales got to have an archbishop. We're not sure that this actually happened.

We do know that David founded monastic settlements in many places. In Wales, of course; also in what was then called Dumnonia, which is now Devon in Cornwall; and also on the continent, in Brittany. He attended and presided over several synods, synods are meetings of bishops to discuss and work out doctrine. And this was a time in the life of the church when doctrine was fairly irregular, and so these meetings were important, and sometimes quite hotly contested, and there's every sign that he administered these meetings well, and built consensus well, and always sided with orthodox teaching, like any good saint.

The most famous miracle of David happened at one of these synods, at a place called Brefi. David is said to have preached to a large crowd, and while preaching to this crowd, teaching them true doctrine, orthodox doctrine, a dove alighted on his shoulder, and the ground rose up beneath him to make a small hill. The Welsh historian John Davies has noted sardonically that, given the topography in that part of Wales, one can scarcely conceive of any miracle more superfluous than the creation of a small hill. But he was declared, in that moment, an archbishop by popular acclaim, according to the stories. The other guy, who was a bishop, saw him speak, saw the hill rise up, and just gave it up and handed it to David.

We do have a record of David's rule, we know that he built these monasteries, these communities of monks, and so we know the rule under which his monks lived. Monks pulled their own plows so they would not burden draft animals. They took only bread and water with salt and herbs for their meals. They had no personal possessions in their communities. Even to use the personal pronoun, "my", was considered an offense.

It's always tricky to preach upon these ancient saints, at least the ones about whom we know so little, and the ones who mean so much to so many, especially like St. David, because we really don't know very much at all. But perhaps we know all we need to know, because we know David's legacy. He is the patron of Wales, and the church is alive in Wales, and historians say that David is at least partly responsible for the continued flourishing of Christianity in Europe through his work in Brittany. There are places named after David in France.

So we know his legacy, we know what his work meant, and what it continues to mean. And it occurred to me, as I was thinking about David, that frustrations of time and history work in two directions. We don't know much about David, but David could scarcely have known the future of Christendom in his unstable time, or the future of his own legacy at the time he lived. And I think that's what Jesus is speaking about in His parable this morning when He talks about planting seeds. And you don't know why they grow or how they grow, they just grow. We plant seeds, and we don't know which ones will sprout, or whether those sprouts will survive, let alone whether they will flourish.

But maybe the grace and the gift of discipleship and the Christian life is that we don't need to know what kingdoms will come from the seeds we plant. It's not our kingdom anyway, it's God's kingdom. And so if it doesn't arise in the day that we set off to build it, that's okay, and maybe a relief. Our job is to plant seeds. To do the little things, the outcomes of which we cannot predict, but which, by faith, we believe will bear fruit in due season. We have this day before us, friends. Which seeds will you plant today?

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

Congregation:

And also with you.

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

Let us pray. Almighty God, You called Your servant David to be a faithful and wise steward of Your mysteries to the people of Wales. Mercifully grant that following his purity of life and zeal for the Gospel of Christ, we may, with him, praise You both here on earth and also in Your everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

And now we pray together 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

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The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

Please join in singing our concluding hymn, number 285.

Choir:

(Singing).

Congregation:

(Singing).

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

Friends, before the blessing, just a reminder that we do have coffee hour downstairs, and also during the season of Lent, every Wednesday at 12:15, we're going to be having a Communion service here in this chapel. I will be preaching and presiding at Communion today. I hope as many of you as are able will join us for this Lenten Communion series this Wednesday and every Wednesday. And now, 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 in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Ichihashi Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.