

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our beloved Memorial Church for our daily service of Morning Prayers. I invite you, please, to rise and join in saying our responsorial psalm, which is number 100 in your black psalter. "May all lands be joyful before you, O God; serve you with gladness and come before your presence with a song."

Congregation:

"For we know that you are God; you yourself have made us and we are yours. We are your people and the sheep of your pasture."

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

"We shall enter your gates with thanksgiving, go into your courts with praise; give thanks to you and call upon your name."

Congregation:

"For you are good, your mercy is everlasting, and your faithfulness endures from age to age."

Choir:

(Singing).

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

This is a reading from the eighth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, beginning at the 34th verse. "Jesus called the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."" Here ends the lesson.

Today, the 20th September, is the Feast Day, the heavenly birthday of the anniversary of the death of Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, who was a 19th century English missionary to Oceania. He was born in 1827, his father was a judge, his mother was the niece of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He went to Eton, then Balliol College, Oxford, and then didn't do great at Oxford. Afterwards, went to Dresden, where he learned German, Hebrew, and Aramaic, discovered that he had a knack for languages, became a fellow at Merton College, Oxford. And while he was there, he was ordained a priest and immediately recruited by George Augustus Selwyn, the first bishop of New Zealand, to become a missionary to the South Seas.

In 1861, Patteson was made first Bishop of Melanesia. He learned 23 languages, 23 local languages, of the islands, which is pretty good, until you consider that there were a thousand languages in his diocese.

He translated the gospels into some of the languages he learned. His hope was to educate young men from the villages in colleges, and then return them to their islands and their villages to serve as new leaders for their people. But the gravest challenge he faced was blackbirding, which was a form of enslavement by deception that was happening a lot at the time. Australian slavers would come to the islands, and either kidnap Indigenous people or trick them into being taken to Australia. They manipulated indentured labor laws to enslave people from these islands.

Patteson worked really hard to suppress this practice. He worked with the local bishops and local officials. He tried to prevent smugglers from coming up from Australia to take workers away to enslave people. On September 20th, this day, in 1871, he was killed on the island of Nukapu in the Solomon Islands. A few days before his arrival, blackbirders, these slavers, had come to the island and abducted several men. Patteson arrived afterwards and he was killed. At the time, and for many years afterwards, his death was interpreted as an accidental revenge for these abductions. His body was treated with a great deal of respect. He was placed in a canoe with palm branches over his chest, and his arms crossed across his chest, and he was put out to sea. And because of the respect with which his body was treated, English interpreters assumed that the islanders realized he had helped to prevent slavery rather than to perpetuate it.

I think this example speaks to the insidious nature of sin, especially a structural sin like slavery, colonialism, white supremacy; it spreads and metastasizes. In the last decade, though, historians and ethnographers of the southern islands have realized that it actually wasn't an accident that Bishop Patteson was killed. That, in fact, to the local people of the island of Nukapu, they didn't see a difference. Their sons were taken either way. The bishop came and took their sons away to school, and they never saw them again; or the slavers came and took their sons away, and they never saw them again. In either case, their children were being stolen. And this, I think, is the better lesson about the insidious nature of sin. It's not only that it spreads the way the first mistaken history of this event suggests, but also because the real insidiousness of sin is that we can mistake it as a virtue in ourselves, and not see how even our best efforts and intentions harm those we hope to serve.

And so this morning, we remember John Coleridge Patteson. We remember his courage; we also repent his error. And we ask God this morning for more courage and more repentance. I invite you, please, to rise for the prayers. The Lord be with you.

Congregation:

And also with you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us pray. Almighty God, who called your faithful servant, John Coleridge Patteson and his companions to witness to the gospel. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon your church, that, by service and devotion to your disciples, your holy name may be glorified and your kingdom made real, even as our own errors are exposed, repented, and purged, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And now we pray the prayer 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:

"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."

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Please join in singing our closing hymn, number 85.

Congregation:

(Singing).

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Before the benediction this morning, two brief announcements. Remember, we have Mem Café downstairs, so please join us in the undercroft for refreshments after the service. And our communion service tonight in this chapel will be held at 5:15 to accommodate people coming from class. We'll talk about Matthew, my namesake, his feast day is tomorrow, tonight at communion. And now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now, and remain with you always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.