

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Speaker 4:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Thank you for braving the rain today to join us for our daily service of morning prayer here in the Applicant Chapel of the Memorial Church. I invite you please to rise and join now in saying our responsorial psalm, which is 140 in your black salter. Deliver Me, oh God from evildoers. Protect me from the violent.

Speaker 4:

Who devise evil in their hearts and stir up strife all day long.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, adder's poison is under their lips.

Speaker 4:

Keep me, oh God, from the hands of the wicked. Protect me from the violent, who are determined to trip me up.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

The proud have hidden a snare for me and stretched out a net of cords. They have set a trap for me along the path.

Speaker 4:

I have said to God, "You are my God. Listen to my supplication"

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Oh God, the strength of my salvation, you have covered my head in the day of battle.

Speaker 4:

[inaudible 00:05:05].

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Surely the righteous will give thanks to your name and the upright shall continue in your sight. (Singing.) This is the reading from the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning at the 16th verse. "When Jesus came to Nazareth where He had been brought up, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was His custom. He stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written. 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,' and He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. Then He began to say to them, 'Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'" Here ends the lesson. In the Episcopal church calendar of saints today. We remember Anna Julia Haywood Cooper. This is not a person I was familiar with before this week. She's a relatively recent saint. She died in 1964, was born in 1859, from this country. She's remembered as an educator, a scholar, and a civil rights advocate. She was born in 1859 in South Carolina to an enslaved woman. We don't know for sure, but it's assumed that her father was her mother's enslaver. She was very bright, very intelligent, and attended as a child, St. Augustine's Normal School, which was an institution the Episcopal church founded in the mid 19th century to educate Black teachers and clergy. Today it's known as St. Augustine's College in HBCU in South Carolina.

When she entered St. Augustine's, she was enrolled in the ladies course of studies. She bristled at that and she was eventually able to get into the more rigorous curriculum, the liberal arts curriculum, and she also thrived in that, and eventually she forced herself into a Greek class that was meant only for people training for ordination, which at the time and for over a hundred years after, was only men. She also did really well in that Greek class, so well that she married the instructor, George Cooper, who was the second Black priest ordained in the diocese, the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina. He died only two years after that. She went to Oberlin and got a degree in mathematics, then she became principal of a high school in Washington DC. There, she wanted to implement the liberal arts curriculum that she thrived in, modeled after the one that WEB Du Bois was calling for.

But the administration thought a vocational curriculum was more suited to their students, she argued with them and eventually left. During her time as principal of this high school, she wrote the book, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*, which is widely regarded as one of the first, if not the first articulation of Black feminism in this country. During this time and afterwards, she spoke widely on civil rights and on women's rights, and in doing so, she took many cultural institutions to task for their racism and their misogyny, not least her own Episcopal church, not least my own Episcopal church, which she criticized harshly for the racism of its administration.

At age 56, she started a PhD in history at Columbia. Her half-brother died, and so she adopted his five children and had to withdraw. But instead after that, after raising the children, she transferred to the [inaudible 00:11:18] where she wrote a dissertation on France's attitude toward American slavery after the War of Independence. She was 67 when she received her PhD from the [inaudible 00:11:29]. After that, she served from 1929 to 1940 as president of Frying Housing University in Washington DC in HBCU, which is now closed, and she died in 1964 at the age of 105. A remarkable life.

This passage we have from the Gospel of Luke, the thing that's interesting about it, he goes home and He says, "Today, the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," and they are really excited about it at first. They're amazed at all He can do and all that they've heard He's done. They say to one another, "Isn't this Joseph? I mean, isn't this Joseph the carpenter's son, this Jesus? Isn't He the son of Joseph down the road?" And they ask Him to do some signs like He did elsewhere, and Jesus says to them, I'm paraphrasing, but Jesus says to them, "I'm not here to do tricks for you. I'm here to call you to repentance and to justice. A repentance and a justice you should have already come to, that the gentiles around you would be more receptive to, but you cannot hear this message. You cannot accept it." And He's right. They don't. They run him out of town and try to throw him off a cliff.

I think this is why, if I'm being generous in a rare moment of self-reflection, the church selects this particular reading, this particular day when we remember Anna Julia Haywood Cooper. Because she's easy to marvel at, what a life, what a remarkable life. But is that what she wants us to do with her life? When we read the New Testament, and especially when we read Jesus's teaching, I often see myself on the inside of Jesus's critique. I'm with Him as He's looking at those others in His hometown saying, "You

had better listen to this call for justice." But especially during Lent, I think it is wise for us to remember that we are usually the target, not the source, of Jesus's most prophetic judgments and statements.

Another way of thinking about that is to ask ourselves the question, have we arrived at the justice Jesus called for 2000 years ago? To make the question more straightforward and more to the point of the day, we might also ask ourselves, where is the justice Anna Cooper called for only 130 years ago? Each week, I stand up here and ask us to remember a saint, and the danger of memory is that we will hold these people up as novelties or bottles. Look what we did. Look how marvelous this person is. Look, this is a person from our hometown who could do these wonderful things. But that's not how Anna Cooper wants us to remember her.

A better form of memory would be to listen to her call for justice and answer. I invite you, please to rise for the prayers. The Lord be with you.

Speaker 4:

And also with you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us pray. Almighty God, who inspired your servant Anna Julia Haywood Cooper, with the love of learning and the skill of teaching, enlighten us more and more through the disciplines of learning and deepen our commitment to the education of all your children. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Speaker 4:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And now we pray the words Jesus taught us, saying, our Father who are 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 in the glory, forever and ever. Amen. Please join in our closing hymn number 257. (Singing.)

A couple of announcements. Due to a large public event, which is being held at the church tonight we will not have any service of holy communion here in the chapel at 5:15. So tell your friends, we don't want hoards of eager communion goers coming at five o'clock, disappointed. Also of course, as every week, please join us downstairs for refreshments in the undercroft after the service at Ben Cafe. And now by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always. Amen. Let us bless the Lord.

Speaker 4:

Thanks be to God.