

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our Memorial Church for this daily service of morning prayers. To begin our service, I invite you please to rise and join in saying our responsorial psalm, which is number 41 in your black psalter.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

Congregation:

The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive and he shall be blessed on the earth, and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

All that hate me whisper together against me. Against me do they devise my hurt.

Congregation:

An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him. And now that he lieth. He shall rise up no more.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Congregation:

But to Thou O, Lord, be merciful unto me and raise me up, that I may requite them.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

By this, I know that Thou favorest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

Congregation:

And as for me, Thou holdest me in my integrity and settest me before Thy face forever.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen and amen.

Congregation:

(singing)

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

This is a reading from the 16th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning at the 10th verse. Jesus said, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If you, then, have been unfaithful with dishonest wealth, who will entrust you with true riches? And if you have been unfaithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters. For a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Here ends the lesson.

This morning in the Episcopal church calendar of saints, we remember Robert Grosseteste, who was a bishop, a statesman, and a theologian and a philosopher of the 12th and 13th centuries. He was born around 1170 of humble parents in Suffolk, England. He rose to become one of the most influential Christians in Medieval England. We know almost nothing of his early life. We know that he was working both in diocesan administration in England and as a papal delegate by the early 1200s. By 1225, he was at Oxford, and then he either studied there or at the University of Paris before taking up a teaching position at Oxford around 1230. He taught the Franciscan community there. More about that in a minute.

Around the same time, he was made Bishop of Lincoln, which was then the largest diocese by area in England. He quickly visited all his parishes, which was not the custom at the time. He removed several priests who were either not doing their job or not doing it well. At some point later, he became Chancellor of Oxford. His teaching at Oxford focused upon the natural world as an object of study and as a source of knowledge about God, but he thought the best way to do that was to study nature on its own. Not consciously as an avenue towards something else, but for itself, to study nature as such.

Like a lot of medieval thinkers, he was reading Aristotle, as given to him by the scholar Hassan Ibn al-Haytham. And because he was reading Aristotle and thinking about studying nature, he became the first European to develop something like the scientific and experimental method. One of his students was the Franciscan Roger Bacon, well-known for establishing this method. And Bacon did establish a scientific method more fully and become a lot more famous than Robert Grosseteste. Grosseteste wrote about biology and physics, especially optics, and really set the ground for the university as a place of scientific inquiry.

He died October 9th, 1253, 771 years ago this day. There were efforts to canonize him among the English after he died, but during his life as a statesman, he had irritated Pope Innocent IV, and so they denied these requests. He's remembered only in the Church of England, not in the Church of Rome.

Grosseteste was also, like most of his fellow medieval churchmen, an anti-Semite, but to a far more vocal degree than most of his fellow churchmen. Early in his career, he intervened to oppose the expulsion of Jewish people from a neighboring diocese, but sometime after that, his heart hardened. Although we have no evidence of him expelling Jewish people from his diocese or from places where he had authority, his later writings are really vile and poisonous. He regards Judaism in those writings as utterly nullified, and the Jewish people as eternally condemned to exile and slavery in this world and to perdition in the world to come. So it's little consolation that we have no evidence of any explicit anti-Semitic actions, because we know that his ideas and the ideas of others like him tilled the soil for violence against Jews in Europe for centuries.

One of the things that saddens me most about our current... I have predicament written here. It's too soft a word. Crisis, catastrophe. One of the things that saddens me most is how obviously anti-Semitism remains a problem in our culture and in our Christianity, but also how difficult it is to talk about, how difficult it is to purge, since the modern association of nation and state has left the very real problem and the very pervasive poison of anti-Semitism so inextricably linked to the retributive and unconscionable violence we see each day in the contemporary Middle East. We have to still try to talk about it, though. And I think we Christians who look back to the European tradition are especially

compelled to talk about it, since we are responsible not only for so much modern anti-Semitism, but also for so many of the things that complicate, obscure, and amplify it today. Like the idea of the nation-state itself and like Islamophobia and like colonialism of the many sorts we innovated.

"If you have been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?" Jesus asks. We Christians received our good news from Jesus and from His people, from His faith. It's something that belonged to Him and that He gave to us. Our history of violence against His people is perhaps the most profound unfaithfulness to the gift of His teaching. And having been so manifestly unfaithful to it, one wonders what we might expect to receive from Him or from God.

Robert Grosseteste did much to establish science as a method and field of study. And for that, he deserves thanks and we give our thanks. But we also recall the generations of hatred he helps spur. When we remember him, it should be as an aid to our own guilty memory, as a mnemonic of our unfaithfulness to the peace which Jesus preached and which He meant for us to embody.

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. Oh God, our Heavenly Father, who raised up Your servant Robert Grosseteste to be a bishop and pastor in Your church, give abundantly to all pastors the gifts of your Holy Spirit, that they may minister in Your household as true servants of Christ and stewards of your divine mysteries 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 and 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 in singing our concluding hymn, number 36.

Congregation:

(singing)

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

As each Wednesday, please join us in the undercroft of the Student Oasis after this service for refreshments and fellowship at MemCafe. And now may the peace of God that passes all our understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of God's son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you this day and always. Amen.

This transcript was exported on Oct 10, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.