

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in the Memorial Church for our daily service of Morning Prayers. I invite you please to rise and join in our responsorial Psalm, which is number 20 in your Black Psalter.

May the most high answer you in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend you.

Congregation:

Send you help from the holy place, and strengthen you out of Zion.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice.

Congregation:

Grant you your heart's desire and prosper all your plans.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

We will shout for joy at your victory and triumph in the name of our God. May the most high grant all your requests.

Congregation:

Now I know that God gives victory to the anointed one. Out of holy heaven, God will answer with a strong and victorious right hand.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of our God.

Congregation:

May they collapse and fall down, but we will arise and stand upright.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

O God, give victory to our sovereign and answer us when we call.

This is a reading from the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John, beginning at the 31st verse. "Jesus said to the Judeans who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.' They answered him. 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying you will be made free?' Jesus answered them very truly. 'I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the son makes you free, you will be free indeed.'" Here ends the lesson.

Those of you returning to this service know that on Wednesdays when I come, I like to tell you about the Saints in the Episcopal church. Our cult of Saints is a little bit different than other traditions' cults of Saints. We do the warts and all thing. We like to talk about those you remember in the fulsomeness of their characters good and bad.

Today is the feast day of Paul Jones, who's a 20th century bishop, American bishop. He was born in 1880, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. He went to Yale. Like I told you, we would talk about them with all their flaws. Then after Yale came here to Cambridge. Not to Harvard, but to the Episcopal Theological School, which was where Lesley University is now.

As a youth, he worked as a strikebreaker in Pennsylvania, but he was sort of radicalized here in Cambridge. At ETS, he studied the Anglican ethicist, F.D. Maurice, and learned about the social gospel tradition, socialism, pacifism. When he was entering his last year of seminary, the missionary bishop of Utah came and preached. And after he was ordained, he went west to serve in Utah. His radicalization continued there, when he saw the treatment of indigenous peoples, and also the treatment of miners and rail workers in the west, most of them immigrants to this country.

He was working there in the early 20th century when World War I was escalating, and the US was considering entering the war. After a widely publicized police raid of a pacifist meeting in Los Angeles, Bishop Jones said publicly that he said that he felt war was unchristian. At the same time, Fort Douglas, near Salt Lake City, became a detention center for both German immigrants and pacifists as war approached. And he was vocal about his opposition to this as well. For these opinions, Bishop Jones was summoned before a committee of the Episcopal House of Bishops in St. Louis, and removed from his position by the end of the year.

Having been removed from the bishopric, he moved to a tiny town in Maine, Brownsville Junction, just a couple of hundred people, and ministered there. 10 years later, he joined the faculty of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where he named himself Bishop of the Universe, and he began there working and agitating for Black civil rights. In 1939, just after the German invasion of Poland, he founded the Episcopal Peace Fellowship. He died of myeloma in 1941, shortly before the United States entered World War II.

Many years after his death in 1957, the Lambeth Conference, which is the closest thing the Anglican community has to a governing board, we're generally ungovernable people. But the Lambeth Conference of Bishops adopted a statement together, condemning war as a method of settling international disputes, finding it incompatible with Jesus's teaching, and urging extension of the right of conscientious objection to all people.

We are in a time of war. This passage from John is the one that the church assigns to Paul Jones' feast day, and it's a complicated one. I almost didn't use it, just because there's so much going on in it. The latent anti-Semitism, which is also so complicated regionally by the Judeans and the Galileans. The Judeans accused Jesus in this discourse of being a Samaritan because He's from Galilee, which is close to Samaria. There was lots of, identities were still being formed. Also, the talk of slavery here. Slavery in the ancient world in Jesus' time was cruel and inhumane, but also categorically different from American chattel slavery. This is too much to address in this five-minute talk, so I want to talk about truth.

Jesus says, "The truth will make you free." And of course, you walk around this place, and that word in Latin is plastered all over the place, Veritas.

Of course, Jesus didn't speak Latin. The Gospels are in Greek, He didn't speak Greek either. But the Gospels are in Greek, and there is actually a subtle distinction between the Latin veritas and the Greek word for truth, which is aletheia. I'm cribbing the philosopher Martin Heidegger here.

But veritas, in the Roman understanding, has to do with rightness, correctness, being correct. And by implication, it also has to do with correcting others. This means, Heidegger said, and others, like Michel Foucault after him, determined and discussed that this kind of truth is always bound up with power, determining what is correct and correcting others who are wrong. Aletheia, the Greek term, actually has etymological roots in the idea of un-concealment. That something, the real thing, the thing that is really at stake, is always hidden, and what truth requires is uncovering what is really at stake.

The bishops who called Paul Jones before them and dismissed him, and the bishops later on in the escalation of war before World War II, they were concerned with what is right with power. Whether it was right to go to war when we have a right to justify violence. Paul Jones was speaking about something else. He was speaking about what had been revealed to him, which is that even our enemies are beloved of God.

Our motto, of course, is Veritas, the Latin version. And part of our work here is determining what's right, being correct, correcting others. Part of our work is determining how justly, and fairly, and morally, to use power, not least our own, because we are a very powerful place, this institution. We should have questions, explore questions of right and wrong here at this university. But I hope we will also carry forth and carry forward this other sense of truth. In this church anyway, and I hope in wider circles of the university, I pray that we will not lose sight also of what has been revealed to us, which is the love of God; a love which undergirds all things, and hides beneath all our moral decisions. And the love to which we are, and will always remain, finally accountable.

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. Merciful God, you sent your beloved Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near. Raise up in this and every land witnesses, who after the example of your servant, Paul Jones, will stand firm in proclaiming the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. And now we pray the words Jesus taught us, saying...

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, forever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Please join in singing our concluding hymn, number 27, We Gather Together to Ask the Lord's Blessing.

(singing)

Please join us this morning downstairs in the undercroft for our first MemCafé of the semester. And now, may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ and love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all this day and always. Amen.

This transcript was exported on Sep 04, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.