

Daily Office Devotional, Tuesday, November 3, 2020
Proper 26, the week of the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Ricard Hooker. (See below.)

Daily Office Lectionary Readings

AM Psalm 61, 62; PM Psalm 68:1-20(21-23)24-36

Ecclus. 43:1-22; Rev. 14:14-15:8; Luke 13:1-9

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, Book of Common Prayer

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, Book of Common Prayer

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, Book of Common Prayer

Daily Office Gospel, Luke 13:1-9

13:1At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2He asked them, ‘Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.’

6 Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7So he said to the gardener, “See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?” 8He replied, “Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. 9If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”’

David’s Reflections

We whose lives are relatively free of tragedy might assume our superiority over those who suffer or who die prematurely, even if we do so secretly to avoid criticism as elitists. In this Gospel Jesus refers to two incidents, well known to his hearers but unknown to us—the death of construction workers and the Roman governor’s slaughter of worshippers. He strikes down one of our favorite ways of classifying people as more or less evil. His hearers assumed that those who have suffered an untimely death must have done something deserving of such a fate. No, says Jesus! We all are sinners before God. The suffering of another person does not indict them

as more evil than those of us who do not suffer. Jesus subverts our ways of layering people and differentiating them as inferior to us.

The parable of the fig tree describes a typical situation. A fig tree would normally yield fruit in the third year. The owner loses patience with a mature tree that had not begun to bear and probably would never bear significantly. The worker pleads for one more year to fertilize and tend the tree and the farmer agrees.

If someone's life has seemed to escape judgment, that person should not assume that they are superior to others or that they have somehow succeeded in averting God's judgment by avoiding evil. Delayed judgment results from God's mercy not from our merit. Like the fruitless fig tree allowed to live a bit longer, we keep on living by God's patient grace. We should not assume, simply because we prosper or avoid suffering, that we are superior to those who are suffering. As unsettling as Jesus' words might be, they indeed are Jesus' words. "Unless you repent, you shall all perish as they did."

What would prompt a person to turn to God for forgiveness? Do we believe that God will force that upon us by "tightening the screws," so to speak? Do we believe that God will force us toward a response by harsh judgments or tragic circumstances? Such assumptions make of God a larger version of a manipulative and controlling human being.

If a child responds to a parent because of the external constraints of displeasure and punishment, how much less meaningful than responding out of affection and devotion. If we must depend on God coercing our loyalty through tragedy, we leave no room for a heartfelt turning to God that begins within ourselves, begins with a profound awareness of our need for forgiveness and with a heightened hunger for a relationship with our creator.

The soul's no more at home in this loud place,
A dark shape wrestling with a darker thing,
Father, forgive me, I cried to His Face.
Forgive my words, no longer close to song.
What I once scorned, I secretly embrace.

Teach me, sweet love, a way of being plain!
My virtues are but vices in disguise,
The little light I had was Henry Vaughan's.
I hunted fire in ice: the soul's unease
In the loose rubble, the least glittering stone:
And what I found was but one riddled bone:

I move, unseeing, toward an absolute
So bright within it darkens all I am;
Am dropped away: dropped out of time,
One still too frail to bear himself, alone

[Theodore Roethke, *Straw for the Fire: From the Notebooks of Theodore Roethke: 1943-1963*, selected and arranged by David Wagoner (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1974), pp. 122-123.]

Collect of the Day: All Saints Day

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.* (BCP, 245)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Richard Hooker, priest and theologian (died 3 Nov 1600 CE). <http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/RHooker.htm>

Collect of the Feast of Richard Hooker

O God of truth and peace, who raised up your servant Richard Hooker in a day of bitter controversy to defend with sound reasoning and great charity the catholic and reformed religion: Grant that we may maintain that middle way, not as a compromise for the sake of peace, but as a comprehension for the sake of truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Peace

Most holy God, the source of all good desires, all right judgments, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, so that our minds may be fixed on the doing of your will, and that we, being delivered from the fear of all enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior. *Amen.* (BCP, 123)

For Vocation in Daily Work

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 261)

A Prayer for Light

Grant us, Lord, the lamp of charity which never fails, that it may burn in us and shed its light on those around us, and that by its brightness we may have a vision of that holy City, where dwells the true and never-failing Light, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 110)

A Collect for Mission

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)