

Daily Office Devotional, Tuesday, April 27, 2021
The week of the fourth Sunday of Easter
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Zita of Tuscany. (See below.)

Daily Office Lectionary readings

AM Psalm 45; PM Psalm 47, 48

Wisdom 3:1-9; Colossians 1:15-23; Luke 6:12-26

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 6:12-26

12 Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. 17 He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. 18 They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

20 Then he looked up at his disciples and said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 'Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. 'Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. 24 'But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25 'Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. 'Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

David's Reflections

Our Bible was divided into chapters in the twelfth century by Stephen Langton, later to become Archbishop of Canterbury. The division of the Old Testament into verses came about in 1448; Rabbi Nathan did it to assist in the debates with Christians. A French printer, Robert Etienne, divided the New Testament into verses in 1551. While those divisions assist in finding particular passages, they are not always reflective of the flow of the text and actually can hinder and distract the reader.

Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount begins at 5:1, which obscures the nature of the audience for the reader, because the audience gets described in the verses immediately preceding the chapter number. We avoid the distraction of that large number 5 here in Luke. The make-up of Jesus' audience stands immediately prior to Luke's version of the sermon (as in Matthew, but without the chapter division severing it from the audience context)--the Twelve, the sick, and those troubled by evil spirits (See Lk. 6:17-18 above).

It is to *that* diverse group that Jesus utters the Beatitudes: blessed are the hungry, those who weep, and those who are oppressed by others. The powerless and the afflicted hear these words of blessing. And, Luke alone contains the corresponding woes--woe to the rich, the full, the laughing, the popular. Just as the fortunes of the sick, the hungry, the weeping, the oppressed will be reversed, so will the fortunes of the gluttonous, the rich, the constantly celebrating and the popular.

Luke's parables carry forward this theme of reversal and salvation for the powerless and those desperate for God's mercy. Of course, the wealthy also can become poor if they let go of finding security in possessions and acknowledge their desperate need for God. And, the poor also can be gripped by greed and the desire for security and resist the merciful salvation that comes only by letting go into faith.

It may well be that we fear our poverty more than anything else, because that poverty resists all our attempts at solution. We are forced into absolute dependence on God's saving love. If we can accept that poverty and look through that doorway, we will discover God's infinite riches and love just over the threshold. As Ann and Barry Ulanov have so powerfully reminded us:

The poverty we so fear becomes the entrance to our inner riches: we own nothing, we possess no one, not even our children who display the face of human dependence so vividly to us. To take this vow of poverty wakes us up

to the plenitude that daily is given us. We breathe easily and eat well, we think, a friend, speaks to us, we are loved. We have only to lose our ease in any one of these things to know their priceless value. The poor in spirit are indeed filled. All we have is given us, and given (we will see if we look hard enough) in abundance. [Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), pp. 60-61]

Collect of the Day, The Fourth Sunday of Easter

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people; Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 225)

Collect of the Weekdays of Easter

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given your Church the great joy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Give us also the greater joy of the kingdom of your elect, when the flock of your Son will share in the final victory of its Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Today we celebrate the Feast of Zita of Tuscany, worker of charity (died 27 April 1272 CE). <http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Zita.html>

Collect of the Feast of Zita of Tuscany

Merciful God, who has given to us all things necessary for life and godliness; Grant that we, like your servant Zita, may be faithful in the exercise of our duties and that, whatever you give us to do, we may do it heartily to you for the honor and glory of your Name; through him who has called us to virtue, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. *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 the Departed

Almighty God, we remember before you today your faithful servant N.; and we pray that, having opened to *him* the gates of larger life, you will receive *him* more and more

into your joyful service, that, with all who have faithfully served you in the past, *he* may share in the eternal victory of Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 253)

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)