

Daily Office Devotional, Monday, May 3, 2021
The week of the fifth Sunday of Easter
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Elisabeth Cruciger. (See below.)

Daily Office Lectionary readings

AM Psalm 56, 57, [58]; PM Psalm 64, 65,
Wisdom 9:1, 7-18; Colossians (3:18-4:1)2-18; Luke 7:36-50

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 7:36-50

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. 37 And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. 38 She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.' 40 Jesus spoke up and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' 'Teacher,' he replied, 'Speak.' 41 'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?' 43 Simon answered, 'I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt.' And Jesus said to him, 'You have judged rightly.' 44 Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.' 48 Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' 49 But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' 50 And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

David's Reflections

What connects us to other people most profoundly? How are we bonded, even to strangers? In this remarkable episode, Simon, the critical Pharisee, and the unnamed woman shared a profound connection. They both were equally sinful and equally in need of God's radical love. Yet, Simon was a covert sinner; to the gaze of anyone, he appeared in a privileged position, much less needy of divine forgiveness than the woman (who may well have been a prostitute). The anonymous weeping woman was an overt sinner—her moral lack, a yawning cavern.

Jesus' parable, put to Simon in the form of a question, frames reality from that perspective. One debtor is forgiven ten times as much as the other, Jesus says. Which will love the creditor more? Simon takes the bait and gives that obvious answer. Yet, that frame actually does not fit the picture; the reality has a different shape.

Both Simon and the woman needed God with equal desperation. They both actually owed 500 denarii. Simon's assumptions about Jesus proved to be skewed. He assumed that Jesus did not know the woman; yet, Jesus obviously had forgiven her before the dinner. He also assumed that Jesus could not be a prophet, because a prophet would have discerned the woman's moral flaw. Wrong again. Jesus, the prophet, discerned Simon's moral flaw in the very moment Simon was assuming otherwise.

As the Nobel Prize winning poet Czeslaw Milosz wrote in his poem "The Winter,"
 This hasn't been the age for the righteous and the decent.
 I know what it means to beget monsters
 And to recognize in them myself.+

What monsters had Simon begotten? Most fundamentally, his blindness to his own need for God had severed his feeling of connection to persons different from himself. Pride stalked his soul and turned him into a stalker of the vulnerable, like the woman at Jesus' feet, and isolated him from that very love of God to which he felt entitled by his obedience.

Today, we can join this woman and weep at Jesus' feet. In part we grieve lost time, energy, relationships, resources—all the losses we have brought upon ourselves by living consumptively, taking rather than giving. But, we also can weep with gratitude for Jesus' ability to discern beneath our wasted lives the hunger driving us

to seek the fulfillment and peace that has kept eluding us. We can weep that Jesus forgives. We can weep that the past is over. We can weep that we have been given a new day. We can weep that we have been found and that what we vainly sought has been given to us.

We do not love much in order to be forgiven much. How foolish! We love much because we have been forgiven much. Yet, when we do share a bit of God's forgiveness with those we forgive, we are led even more deeply into God's grace and forgiveness.

+From "Winter," Czeslaw Milosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 420.

Collect of the Day, Fifth Sunday of Easter

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 225)

Collect of the Weekdays of Easter

Almighty God, you show the light of your truth to those who are in error, to the intent that they may return to the way of righteousness: Grant to those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to it; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Today we celebrate the Feast of Elisabeth Cruciger, poet and hymnographer (died 2 May 1535 CE). http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/elisabeth_cruciger.html

Collect of the Feast of Elisabeth Cruciger

Pour out your Spirit upon all of your sons and daughters, Almighty God, that like your servant Elisabeth Cruciger our lips may praise you, our lives may bless you, and our worship may give you glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Collect for the Renewal of Life

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done

your will with cheerfulness while it was day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 99)

Of the Holy Angels

Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals: Mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment they may help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 251)

A Prayer for Light

Almighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us, as daylight fades, with the brightness of the vesper light; and we implore you of your great mercy that, as you enfold us with the radiance of this light, so you would shine into our hearts the brightness of your Holy Spirit; through 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)