

THE VENERABLE BEDE

THE LESSON: ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

*“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,
plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”
(Jeremiah 29:11)*

A new challenge had emerged in the early seventh century: Islam. Adherents to this new religion embarked on an aggressive military campaign which swept through many lands once dominated by Rome, conquering them one by one in a matter of decades. This included the Middle East, North Africa, Spain and parts of Eastern Europe. The Christian kingdoms of Europe became preoccupied with defending their lands against this new threat, and in the early 700s a successful defence against Islamic assaults was maintained in the cities of Constantinople and Tours. During these years, however, the Christian faith continued to spread in the north, particularly in what is now the United Kingdom, where Bede lived out his days.

*“Lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”
(1 Timothy 2:2)*

Bede was born in northeast England in the year 673. As a child of seven he was sent to a local monastery where he was educated and grew to become a monk, scholar and author. By worldly standards Bede’s life was not extraordinary. He lived the quiet, prayerful life of a monk. He studied scripture and the writings of the early Church fathers. He visited local monasteries and corresponded with friends. And he wrote books to aid in the teaching of scripture and Christian history.

*“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”
(Matthew 23:12)*

In spite of its lack of drama, Bede’s quiet life made an impact all throughout the Middle Ages because of the care that he poured into everything he wrote. It was not till a century after his death that the extraordinary nature of his work became more apparent, and people began to refer to him with the title “The Venerable”.

Most of the books that Bede wrote were meant to help students study and understand scripture, but the book he is best remembered for is his “Ecclesiastical History of England” (about the expansion of the Christian Church in that country). His historical writing took as its model the biblical book of the Acts of the Apostles, which sees history through the lens of the Holy Spirit’s work in believers, to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Bede understood that it was not always smooth sailing for the Church, but he believed that God was in control of the past, present and future. “Finally”, wrote Bede, “Britain also attained to the great glory of bearing faithful witness to God.”

*“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
(1 Corinthians 10:31)*

Bede was not a man who sought glory for himself, but rather one who devoted his life to pointing others to God, specifically through the scriptures and the writings of the early Church fathers. In a brief autobiographical note found at the end of one of his books, we find this expressive prayer of supplication:

“I beseech Thee, good Jesus, that to whom Thou hast graciously granted sweetly to drink in the words of Thy knowledge, Thou wilt also vouchsafe in Thy loving-kindness that he may one day come to Thee, the Fountain of all wisdom, and appear for ever before Thy face.”

Bede died very much as he had lived; quietly in his monastery room, singing the words of the Gloria: “*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost*”.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: THE VENERABLE BEDE, “THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE”, TRANS. A.M. SELLAR | DAVID FARMER, “OXFORD DICTIONARY OF SAINTS” | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, “THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 1” | GERARD SAMPSON, “LAYMAN’S BOOK OF SAINTS”.)

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AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Review today's lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of Bede that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen. Decide on one concrete action you can take this week based on your reflections, *and* share your reflections and your plan of action with a friend.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following prayer.

O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy Name for the gifts of grace manifested in thy servant Bede, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, POET, OR SCHOLAR, P. 317)