

Sermon July 11, 2021 Amos 7:7-15; Mark 6:14-29

Within our Gospel reading last week, Jesus was met with denial and disbelief as He and the disciples went back to His hometown. In that passage, He referred to Himself not as the Son of God or the Messiah, but as a prophet. The readings from this morning continue to reveal the difficulties faced by prophets.

Prophets, and those authentically religious and spiritual people, even today, will almost always be opposed. We probably wouldn't think of prophets among us today, per say, but anyone who is effectively serving God will face opposition, persecution and trial; whether this is done within our communities, work, school or even our own home. The logic behind this opposition is both simple and sad: the world is, and has been, turned upside down to the point we simply cannot handle the truth. The truth about ourselves, especially when that truth seems to speak to us from an opposing vantage point. It all comes back to falling short in the lives we are called to lead by God. And more and more those lives seem to be moving away from the truth, His truth. This morning we read of Amos and John, two prophets who stood for the truth, who spoke truth to power, regardless of the consequences and even danger their messages may have involved.

Amos was tough. He was blunt. He said things no one wanted to hear in Israel at that time, and things that wouldn't be very welcoming today, either. Like many chosen by God, he spoke not from a religiously educated upbringing, but that of a herdsman, a farmer of sorts. He was chosen by God, and willingly accepted God's call to deliver His message to unwelcoming ears.

At this time, Israel was split geographically, Israel to the north, Judah to the south. The center of religious celebration was now in Bethel, rather than Jerusalem. King Jeroboam wanted to break from Jewish tradition. So much so that in verse 13, Amaziah states that Bethel is "the king's sanctuary". The king's sanctuary, not God's. It was clear that in Israel at this time the government dictated the order of faith.

Amos was from Judah, and God sent him to deliver His message to Israel. The primary message he was to extend was a matter of justice, with respect to what we call social justice. Since the time of the Exodus, God had called for equality

among His people. Clearly that had not been followed. The select rich and powerful became richer and more powerful; the poor became poorer, and their numbers grew disproportionately within society. The religious leaders such as Amaziah were no longer concerned with following God's direction for equality, as they, too, were appointed politically. In earlier chapters within his book, Amos declared "They hate the one who calls for justice at the gate and abhor the one that speaks the truth. As a result, you trample on the poor and snatch from them their necessary grain for living, building houses of well-dressed stones. But you will not live in them! You have planted lovely vineyards, but you will never drink the wine! You have afflicted the righteous, taken bribes and shoved aside the needy at the gate "(Amos 5:10-12).

This morning, the direction of God's words through Amos become even more political. God told Amos "I will never again pass them by." Israel has long been defined as those whom God "passed over" (Passover) in their escape from Egypt. They remained safe while others died. This led to their freedom. God will now will no longer pass them over, but pass through them, wreaking desolation and waste on "the high places of Isaac" and "the sanctuaries of Israel."

There is truly a heart issue with Israel that needs fixed. But Amaziah refuses to listen to Amos' words in that context; he refuses to recognize and understand what Israel has become. Instead, Amaziah views Amos as the problem, not part of any solution (how could his words be a solution when they failed to recognize any problem within Israel). In delivering the message to King Jeroboam, Amaziah misrepresents the nature of God's message to be personal threats by Amos himself. While he considers Amos a threat, he even further confronts him by, calling him a "seer" - degrading the words of God through Amos to those of a fortune teller, a cheap magician. He tells Amos to go back home, away from Bethel, away from the king's sanctuary. In doing so, Amaziah makes it very clear, God has nothing to do with this house of worship, but this house of worship has everything to do with Jeroboam and his monarchy. The church had become compromised by the state, and had in effect become a rubber stamp for whatever the state desired.

In our Gospel reading, we find the recount of John's imprisonment at the hands of King Herod. Compared to Amos, we feel we "know" John, at least we are more familiar with his story. We know the lineage that precedes him, his own miraculous birth, his crazy mannerisms, living conditions and preaching style. Like Amos, John is blunt and direct. "You brood of vipers" And like Amos, John shows humility. When asked who he was, he spoke in terms of who he wasn't (the Messiah), he continually pointed to the One to follow and not to himself, he knew that in time his followers would decrease as the Messiah's would increase.

John's relationship with Herod is quite the head scratcher, though. As a man, Herod was both weak and prideful, which is not a good combination and proved to be John's downfall. Herod himself was a bit fascinated by John. He liked listening to John and recognized John as being righteous and holy, but he feared John as a result. This despite John's preaching addressing the sinfulness of Herod's marriage to his brother's wife, Herodias. As a result of John's public directness, she hated John, held a grudge and wanted him killed. But Herod feared John, so he protected him by imprisoning him. This all led to the scripture we read from Mark a bit ago leading to John's beheading.

What does this all have to do with us? First of all, we must be careful with how we listen and respond to God's word. Neither Amos nor John left any room for guessing to be done or assumptions to be made. Take care of the poor; repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. Instead, in the days of Amos, Amaziah listened only to maintain the legitimacy of the government and monarchy rather than hear God's words from Amos as a sign Israel needed to change. The poor remained of no concern for him or for Israel. For John, in the end, Herod chose to listen to the pride within his heart and the voice of his wife, rather than the voice of his own conscience. Better for John to die, no matter how much he knew it was wrong, than to lose face and go back on his word in front of society.

When we read or hear the word of God, what is our reaction? Do we read scripture only as words for those people at those times, or do we read to their application to our lives? Do we shake our heads in agreement when we relate behaviors that need changed collectively as a community or society? Do we

"fill in the blank" when scripture seems to be describing a person we know or situation we've gone through. What about the times when the scripture doesn't seem to point to sins that so much belong to a society or group, but points to us individually? Do we freely admit our guilt or make excuses for ourselves, maybe even validate the sinfulness? Do we compare the nature of the sin to that of others to feel good about ourselves, even as if God views us "not as bad as others"? Do we feel as though we can turn our conscience on and off, much like Herod must have felt? I must admit that know I have.

What about the sermons you've heard or those you hear each week? Not just at Zion, as I am certain you may listen to preachers throughout the week or even visit others on Sundays you may not be here. What about those times when shifting in the chairs is no longer about comfort (or even that it is time to say "Amen" already!)? What about those times when it seems that the point being made seems a bit further than preaching, a bit more personal and a bit too close to meddling? Hopefully you aren't feeling that way now! Perhaps again, we can relate all too well to Herod.

But listening is only part of the problem of the truth we have within God's word. The other problem Christians seem to have with the truth is refusing to proclaim it when we should. God hasn't called us to wear a camel's hair coat and eat wild locusts and honey, storming into towns yelling "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" We aren't necessarily asked to go into unwelcoming lands to spread His Word. All the same, He has commanded us in our own way to be prophets, and proclaim His words as we have the opportunities to do so. And there is no ideal place to serve God in proclaiming His Word than the very place He sets us down. Every moment of every day is that opportunity. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

In a culture where it is still relatively easy to speak about Jesus Christ, we seem to have a reluctancy, perhaps even a shame or embarrassment in doing so. After all, we don't want to cross any social boundaries or those of political correctness. We don't want anyone to feel we are imposing our beliefs upon

others. We wouldn't want any of our neighbors or co-workers to think we are a judgmental religious fanatic. We don't want the person in the grocery store or restaurant to think we're a Jesus freak! We don't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable especially ourselves. So we don't speak. We allow our fear to become stronger than God's Word. His promises.

"So what?" if I miss a small chance to tell someone about Jesus Christ? There will be other opportunities, and there are certainly others who are doing it. Besides, if John didn't stand up to Herod, they would have sinned anyway, and John would have been alive longer to tell many more people about the Messiah. But in doing so, John would have made himself a liar, a coward, a false prophet and one who rebels against God. If we know the truth and refuse to speak it, we are in some sense a false prophet as well. False to God's purpose for each of us. We are cowardice because of refusing to do the right thing because of how it may make us feel. Turning the other way from what we know to be wrong to feel safe for ourselves. Perhaps worst of all, we rebel against God. "Go and make disciples..." "Oh, you mean me? I thought you just meant the pastors and priests and bishops." We are to share Jesus Christ with others. Not when we are ready, better trained, a couple of times during our lives or only when the conditions seem perfect, when there seems to be little downside or risk. No, we are to share Jesus with others (period).

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake." (Matthew 5:10-11) Blessed are Amos and John and those like them, who line the streets of heaven because they put God's Word, the Truth, before their very own life. If our aim in life is smooth sailing with no storms or risks due to our faith, then that is not living the Christian life. The Christian life is to walk the path of the prophets, and in the very footsteps of Christ. Journeys which will endure failures and struggles and suffering. Journeys which provide the opportunity every day to be courageous for Jesus's sake; every day an opportunity to be a prophet. It may be in giving thanks, training a child to know God; it may be within your workplace or neighborhood. Perhaps even on the street in sharing peace and the good news with someone needing a helping hand and perhaps a few dollars. But we are all

called by God to be a courageous prophet who willingly and faithfully proclaim His Word. So let us live the lives we profess each week right here when we leave each service and "Go out reaching in for the Holy Spirit, reach up for God's grace and reach out with Christ's love." Reaching out to others knowing we may be met with opposition rather than welcome; but knowing full well that each time we fall, we are caught within the loving arms of our Father.

Amen

WEEKLY SUNDAY PREVIEW

July 18, 2021

Mark's Gospel makes clear how great was the press of the crowd, with its countless needs to be met, on Jesus and his disciples. Yet in today's Gospel Jesus advises his disciples to get away and rest, to take care of themselves. Sometimes we think that when others are in great need we shouldn't think of ourselves at all; but Jesus also honors the caregivers' needs. We are sent from Christ's table to care for others and for ourselves.

This Week's Lessons

This is an opportunity to read the verses before the passage that we will share on Sunday. Sometimes the lessons are taken out of context and lead to questions that the lesson we read on Sunday do not quite answer.

THE LESSONS

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 23: 1-6

Please be seated.

¹Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. ³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

⁵The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

PSALM: Psalm 23

Read in unison.

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

³He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his name's sake.

⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.

⁶Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in
the house of the LORD forever.

SECOND READING: Ephesians 2: 11-22

¹¹So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision" — a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands — ¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the World. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a Holy Temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

L The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: Mark 6: 30-45; 53-56

³⁰The Apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. ³⁵When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; ³⁶send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." ³⁷But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" ³⁸And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." ³⁹Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to Heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²And all ate and were filled; ⁴³and they took up twelve

baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men. ⁴⁵Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. ⁵⁴When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, ⁵⁵and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A Rooted in Christ and sustained by the Spirit, we offer our prayers for the Church, the World, and all of creation.

Silence for reflection.

A Tend your Church, O God. Encourage bishops, pastors, and deacons in their proclamation of the Gospel. Raise up new leaders and encourage those pursuing a call to ministry. Embolden all the baptized to embody your love and justice. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

A Restore your creation, O God. Sustain croplands and pastures and safeguard all farm animals and livestock. Preserve lakes, rivers, and streams that offer refreshment. Revive lands recovering from natural disasters and protect coastlands threatened by rising oceans. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

A Reconcile the nations, O God. Break down the dividing walls that make us strangers to one another and unite us as one human family. Equip leaders to deal wisely with conflict and guide diplomats who seek peaceful solutions. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

A Heal your people, O God. Look with compassion on immigrants, exiles, and all who are afraid or feel lost. Give rest to those who are weary, comfort to those who are grieving, and recovery to those who are ill especially Michael, Wesley and JoAnn, Mark and Margaret, Ruth, the family of Don Brooks, the family of Evan Taylor, all of those who are still suffering from COVID-19 and those we lift to you aloud and in our hearts. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

A Nourish this congregation, O God. Prepare a table where we receive food for our hungering spirits. Renew our commitment to provide for one another and revitalize our ministries of feeding and nurturing hungry neighbors. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

A You lead us home, O God. We give thanks for all who have died, now citizens with the saints especially Don and Evan. As you have received them into your Heavenly home, so welcome all of us to dwell in your house forever. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

Here other petitions may be offered. (Feel free to add a petition that may be close to you.)

- P** We lift these and all our prayers to you, O God, confident in the promise of your saving love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C** Amen.



CONTACT THE PASTOR

Communications requesting pastoral care should be made directly to Pastor Larry Baker, (614) 257-8560.

VIRTUAL MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

David and Jean Fell are hosting a Virtual Marriage Encounter Weekend on August 27-29th. For many couples the pandemic has put a great deal of stress on their marriage, so now is the perfect time for them to sign up for a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend designed to strengthen and enrich their marriage. They have asked that we please give married husbands and wives in our congregation the opportunity to celebrate their special relationship while learning unique insights and tools to improve intimate communication. If you are interested in this opportunity, there are copies of their email on the table.



Proverbs 13:22 offers this wisdom, "The good leave an inheritance for their children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for righteousness."

Investing now in good nutrition for women and children in the 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday is critical not just for the survival and thriving of individual children now but a critical foundation for the future of nations.

As we address race and gender equity in our food systems, we affirm the dignity of all humans, particularly women and children, as we are created in God's image. Like the persistent widow, we cry for justice in the land and trust that God's justice will prevail. But we begin in a spirit of confession that we have not trusted in God's abundance nor let wisdom be our guide.

Let us pray:

O Lord, how manifold are your works! The Earth is full of your creatures, who look to you for their food.

You open your hand to fill all your creatures with good things, but in our weakness, humanity distrusts your loving kindness. Fear leads us to hoard your gifts for ourselves; greed leads us to demand payment for what we have hoarded; pride leads us to claim that fear and greed are wisdom.

And mothers and children experiencing hunger weep.

We beg you, O Lord, to renew our trust in you. Grant us the courage, generosity, and humility to repent of our weakness and open our own hands to the hungry. Finally, O Lord, we beg you to grant us true wisdom, that we may rejoice as you fill all your creatures from the abundance of the World that you created and called good.

Amen.

PRAYERS



*You are in my
thoughts and
prayers.*

Please keep these people in your prayers: Michael Koch; Wesley and JoAnn Porter; Mark Phillips and Margaret Bussard; Ruth, the soon to be born daughter of Brandon and Lauren Doran (Jody and Richard Taylor's great granddaughter); the family of Don Brooks; the family of Evan Taylor; and all of those who are still suffering from COVID-19 and their families.

Please remember all of our shut-ins and sick, Arlene Castor, Nancy Hoenie, Norma Hicks, and Richard Fogt. We have not heard from the Toys or the Stelzs for quite a while. (Also, pray for the families and caretakers of those on the prayer list.) Our list is growing.

The address for Michael and the Koch family is 224 West Romany Loop, Beverly Hills, FL 34465. You can get updates from Linda at www.caringbridge.org/visit/michaelkoch2?fbclid. Keep all of the Koch's in your prayers.

If you hear or know of anyone who should be on our Prayer List, please let me know, my number is 614 398-6302 or lejohn7310@icloud.com

FUNDS FOR ZION

We are all probably doing more shopping on line during this pandemic. Did you know that when you shop at smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7201301, AmazonSmile donates to Zion Lutheran Church?

Also, if you have a Kroger card, you can designate Zion to receive a percentage of your grocery expenses. Go to the service desk to inquire.

REMEMBER SPECIAL FAMILY DAYS/SIGN-UPS

We are asking those who would normally remember special family celebrations by signing the calendar for flower donations too, instead, donate money in lieu of flowers. The money will go to the food pantry.

Please check the bulletin board behind the door to the office for all of the sign-up sheets for this year. Lectors and Worship Assistants are also welcome. Thank you so much!

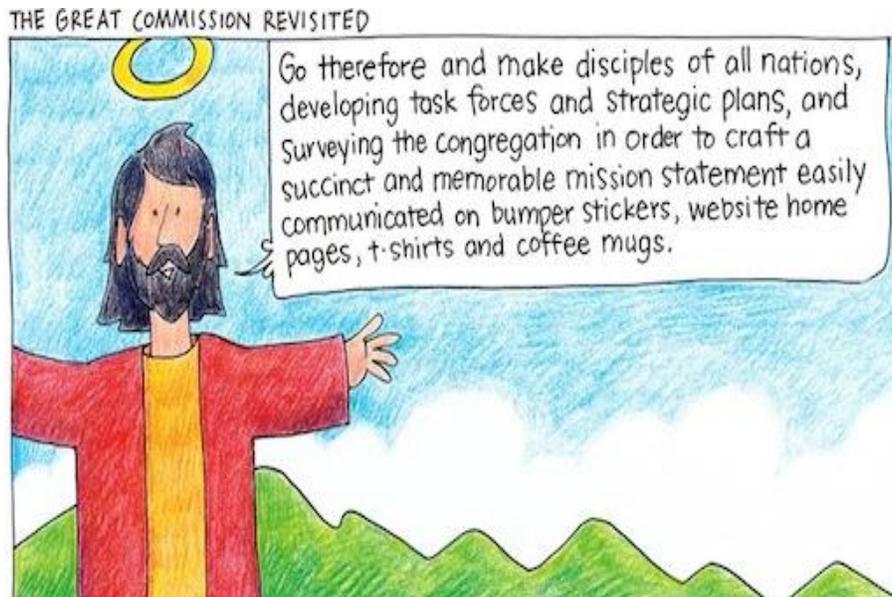
If you need a new Directory, contact me in one of the usual ways and I will add it to the mailing that week.

Remember that if you would like to pick the hymns for a particular Sunday, please let me know which Sunday and which hymns you would like to have us sing. We are looking at Gathering and Sending. Looking forward to your choices.

(If you wish to sign up for food on the Altar or service assistant for a particular Sunday and are not going to be here to do so, let me know via email, text, or messenger, and I will sign you up for that Sunday.)

Hope to see you this Sunday.

God bless you all this week.



Listen, listen, God is calling,

through the Word inviting,

offering forgiveness,

comfort, and joy.

Jesus gave his mandate:

share the good news

*that he came to save us
and set us free.*

*Listen, listen, God is calling,
through the Word inviting,
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