

Lessons for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 14, 2024

Psalm 85:(1-7) 8-13 ~ *A prayer for God's mercy in distress expressed in the context of confident trust.*

Amos 7:7-15 ~ *When Amos set Israel against the plumb line of God's will, he incurred the anger of Amaziah.*

Ephesians 1:3-14 ~ *To understand the mystery of God's plan for us in Christ, we must know God's demands in His law.*

Mark 6:14-29 ~ *When John confronted Herod with his sin, Herodias' wrath fell on John's head.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: On a Mighty Mission

The lessons today call us to a commitment beyond ourselves. Amos chided Amaziah, "I don't preach for a living; I preach for God!" When John the Baptizer confronted Herod with his sin, it brought down the anger of an unrepentant Herodias on John's head. St. Paul clarifies the eternal scope of our mission: "God has brought all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ." We are committed to witness faithfully to God's word as we proclaim His demands and His steadfast love in Christ our Savior.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, help me keep the essential things of life separated from the unessential. Give me strength by your Spirit that I never compromise the truth of your grace, but that I maintain a winning way of sharing your love with others. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: To understand how well we are doing in turning our lives over to God, we only need to look at how we use the material goods with which God has blessed us. When we get defensive about our stewardship, we are probably not standing up well to the plumb line of God's will.

OFFERING PRAYER: God of mercy and of might,
your redeeming love has claimed us.
In baptismal grace you named us.
Guide our will to use your gifts aright. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: If we are just working to make a living, we can measure ourselves against the standing and progress of others, but when we are working for our Lord, we are measured by his plumb line. Against God's just demands and absolute righteousness, we fall so far short that we, like Herodias, lash out to accuse and destroy those who confront us with God's word. But the mystery of God's holy will includes the redemption worked out in Christ's blood to bring us into him who is the fulfillment of God's plan for us.

Questions to Consider: How would a leaning wall react to a perpendicular structure?

- What did Amos mean by saying he preached for God?
- How does Christ's sacrifice on the cross call us to a mission bigger than ourselves?
- What are two different ways we might respond to God's righteous demands?
- What makes us able to proclaim God's demands to a sinful world while keeping a straight face?

Bonus on Page 2: The Robe of Righteousness – Here is the contrast between God's demands and His gift.

The Robe of Righteousness

Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3

The righteous lives of those the Lord has claimed
to shine like torches in the dark of night
should bring the people of the nations home
to pay their thanks and tribute to the Lord.
But we display ourselves in ragged cloaks
and show for finery our gems of paste!
Our sad, pathetic lives will never draw
our neighbors to the glory of our God!

But wait! He takes away our costume jewels
and in their place gives us a king's own crown!
He strips us of the filthy rags we wear,
exposing all the nakedness of sin,
and gives us garments new, in saving grace:
His robe of royal blood to wrap us in.
This coronation robe, this diadem,
this gift of love gives witness to our God!

– Gilbert A Franke, 12/27/2014