

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 11, 2021 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Amos 7:12-15

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple." Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

Psalm: Ps 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims;
the LORD-for he proclaims peace.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,
glory dwelling in our land.

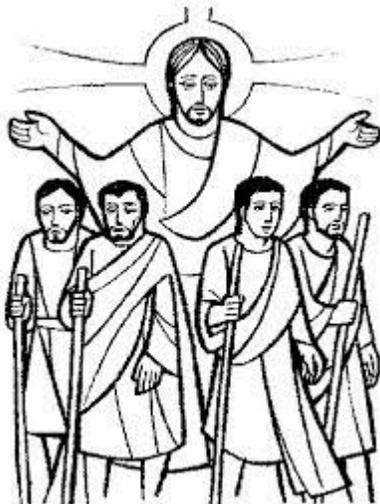
R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

The LORD himself will give his benefits;
our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him,
and prepare the way of his steps.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.



Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick-no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

I was out for a drive in the beautiful weather. The city had its usual non-country and somewhat ruined appearance, and I was merely doing shopping chores. Suddenly, unexpectedly, simple gratitude came upon me. Not earth-shaking, not the result of complicated reasoning, just a modest, gentle joy. I looked in admiration at my hands, which work reasonably well. I thought of the friends in my life, the special ones. Without being prompted, I said out loud the words, “thank you.” Later, this very quiet event had a conclusion: Gratitude is a springboard for giving back. The primary motivation for giving is gratitude. Another example, too personal I suppose involves my wide-set eyes. I have never been able to look through both lenses of any set of binoculars. For years my brother had set his mind to solving this problem and he came up with results that almost worked but never quite. Miraculously, even as I was writing this very reflection, a birthday present came in the mail. You guessed it, a set of binoculars. But don’t get excited, these did not fit either. I could look out of either one lens or the other, not both at the same time. Hoping against hope I wrestled with widening the distance between the arms and it got complicated. By accident, I narrowed the distance instead of widening it. Suddenly, I could see with both eyes! These binoculars at their widest were too wide for me!!!! With its arms narrowed I could see, and that meant seeing in 3D as well!

I love the binoculars, of course, but more, I imagined my brother sending them to me, his face holding back a grin. I was grateful to him and for him. That gratitude makes me want to do something for him in return. Put simply, the primary motivation for giving is gratitude. How does this apply? We must ask why Amos responded so boldly in the First Reading. Amos, the prophet, who was a shepherd and “dresser of sycamores,” found that God wanted him for a new job. No more watching the flock, no more pruning the trees. Now he was to be a visionary: someone who would prophesy to the people. Of course Amos dropped everything and went off to Bethel (about 10 miles North of Jerusalem) where he preached fire and brimstone against the way of life he saw in them. As a result, the head priest of Bethel threw this rebel out of the city. But get this, Amos went south to Judah and sermonized there. Why? Perhaps the fierce, quiet landscape of the country had opened him and had let God give to him. In that case, his preaching was an act of gratitude. We can say this same thing for the apostles in the Gospel. They were men of action so they probably did not actively notice that they were becoming grateful to Jesus. But they did have a growing realization of what he was giving to them, and quietly they loved him more and more. When he told them to go out and preach and banish demons, they knew that the mission fit them. He had found a way for them to begin seeing with both eyes. If so, their gratitude was the reason for going where he sent them. Let us keep our eyes open too. We are very much loved. And ready to be sent.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. How do you feel about rejection? Can you think of any prophet who didn’t experience rejection? They chased Amos out of Bethel. What do you do when something needs to be done that makes everyone uncomfortable? What are some situations today that need prophets? Are you willing to take on the job?
2. “In him we also ... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. ... ” Has the Holy Spirit been active in your life, guiding, fixing, enlightening, giving courage, helping you trust? Has God lavished his grace on you through the Holy Spirit this year? This week? Today?
3. “Evangelizing” means to bring the Good News to all humanity, and through its influence to make humanity new, transform it from within. Can you yourself transform humanity around you in your daily life?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who for the faith they profess are accounted Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honor. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen