

July 15, 2018

Am 7:12-15; Eph 1:3-14 (1:3-10, short); Mk 6:7-13

We all know or have heard of people who do a lot of things that are good, but at their core there is no love in these actions but rather other motives. The actions and what is behind them can be two different things. When Jesus sent out the Apostles in the Gospel today he was sending them out as more than social workers to do good things, on the surface, he was looking for something deeper. He had called them from average lives, he gave them power and authority, and then he sent them out. Jesus does the same to us - but we might not realize it. Some think that just doing good things is what the Christian life is all about - that Jesus came to tell us how to live here on Earth - and as long as we follow the rules that's what Jesus was looking for. But just like the people mentioned a minute ago, a person's actions are not the whole story. Is doing good things enough for Jesus? It is certainly better than not doing good things, but as Christians we are called to more. In some ways we are called to be prophets.

But you may say: "Gee Fr. Steve, I'm not a prophet. That's not what I was trained to do." Well Amos had similar thoughts. In the first reading when the people are telling him to earn his living prophesying somewhere else, they are essentially calling him a fake prophet. They were suggesting that he is like a person I mentioned earlier who is doing good things on the outside, but did not have the right motives. But Amos is not silenced, and he says to them: *I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores* [essentially a landscaper]. *The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel.* He says that you don't have to tell him he's not qualified,, you don't have to question him - he has questioned himself enough. But what he does know is that this is not something he picked on his own, this is coming from a calling felt deeply in his heart - this is something that God has called him to - and it is in the depth of that call that he finds his strength and voice. God can give even the most unlikely person the power and strength needed in any situation - we have to depend on God to give us what we need - and yes, we can even take on a mission for God despite feeling unworthy or unsure.

Look at the Apostles that Jesus sends out today. These were not trained Rabbis or highly educated individuals. They were fishermen, tax collectors, tradesmen, common people. We hear

today that: *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 ... no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals.* They accomplish great things - not because they are well educated preachers - the great things are accomplished because of the power and authority that Jesus gave to them. They were to trust in Jesus to give them what they needed - this is why Jesus tells them to take nothing with them on the journey. But there are two important things to look at in Jesus' command. First, although he does tell them to bring nothing and trust him to provide for what they will need, he does tell them to wear sandals - it's like he is saying I will provide, but don't be foolish and ignore the basics. Secondly, he sends them out two by two - he shows them that they have to partner with others in this mission.

The apostles were not called to be social workers and have it stop at that - there was something deeper Jesus was asking. And it is the same thing he asks of us. Our motive in doing good cannot be blind obedience, praise for ourselves, personal gain, or just to promote a good and worthy social program. We are called to have the deeper motive of participating in God's healing action in the world and also drawing others to a relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Like the Apostles, Jesus will give us what we need if we have faith and live in the Church. Jesus often warned that there would be "false prophets." False prophets can do good things, but they water down the message of the Gospel and make it all about people helping people for society's sake. Their good actions are ends in themselves. We are called to realize that in Baptism we are chosen for something greater than a mission of social service in the world. We heard in our second reading: *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.*

We are adopted in Baptism, empowered in Confirmation, and strengthened by the Eucharist. We are called by our good works to alleviate suffering, poverty, and injustice in our world - and so doing to proclaim a great truth. The truth is the reality of the great blessing bestowed on all those who call God "Father," and regularly strengthened by the Eucharist, lead ourselves and others to a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ. This is the mission of the true prophet, this is the deeper love that balances off our failings, this is the great challenge of Jesus Christ to which we are called - and which gives true meaning to our lives.