

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #104

READING I Amos 7:12-15

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos

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.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14 (8)

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

Truth shall spring out of the earth,

and justice shall look down from heaven.

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.

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.

Kindness and truth shall meet;

justice and peace shall kiss.

For meditation and context:

Amos = Aƿ-m*
Announce the name of the book carefully.
It is read only once in the Sundays of Year B.
Amaziah = am-uh-zī-uh
Bethel = BETH-
Judah = JŪ-duh
prophesying = PROF-uh-sī-ing
prophesy = PROF-uh-sī (verb)
Read “never again” with force.
Amos is not self-deprecating or apologetic.
He is explaining himself; he was not a career prophet.

READING I

Whether prophets or apostles, those who bear challenging messages are often resisted and rejected. Such resistance frequently comes from political and religious leaders, as the prophet Amos discovers. Living in the eighth century bc, Amos, an agriculturalist from Judah (the southern kingdom), was active during the period of the two kingdoms, and challenged the religious and political leadership of Israel (the northern kingdom). Despite the relative economic prosperity of the era, all was not well. As a vassal state to the larger kingdom (Israel), Judah and its

population financed Israel’s imperial ambitions through heavy taxes and tribute. Three times a year, Judah’s people reported to the shrine at Bethel, delivering tribute in spite of the hardships caused by plague and fire. Oppressed like other Judeans, and pressed by God into prophecy, Amos’ visit to Bethel led him to deliver fiery oracles against the nations, sermons describing Israel’s abuses of the poor, calls to change, and visions of Bethel’s future destruction. Today’s reading is a brief biographical narrative from those final visions. It describes Amos’ confrontation with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel. The surrounding visions define God’s message through Amos: the Lord seeks the removal of Israel’s dynasty and its cultic establishment and seeks to restore the house of David over all of Israel. Amaziah, representing king and cult, makes it clear that Amos’ message is not welcome in Israel. Indeed, it is seen as treason. For his part, Amos emphasizes the dire nature of things when he notes that he is neither a prophet nor a part of a larger group of prophets. Rather, he is a “shepherd and a dresser of sycamores.” In other words, he

READING II Ephesians 1:3-14

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

[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. »

Shaped by some of the liturgical features of blessings (such as frequent repetitions), and consisting of one long sentence, the blessing in Ephesians blesses God and the recipients of God's blessing by describing God's universal plan for salvation that has existed from "before the foundation of the world" and is now fulfilled in Christ. In Christ, the recipients of blessing have been chosen and destined for God. They have received spiritual blessing, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, grace, and wisdom and insight into the mystery of God's will. Most importantly, believers have received the Holy Spirit as the promise of their "inheritance toward redemption," in addition to its liturgical features, the blessing depicts God as a patron who has released his dependents through his agent (redemption through Christ), reflecting the patron-client relationship of the age. Somewhat uniquely, the blessing emphasizes that this redemption is already experienced now, thus setting believers apart from others in the age, even as it points to future redemptive features.

Ephesians = ee-FEE-zhuhnz

A lot is packed into this reading. Try reading other Scripture translations to aid in your understanding of the text.

Paul is describing the effects of being followers of Christ: adopted, redeemed, forgiven, have encountered the mystery, chosen. Use energy but don't exhaust the listener. Practice your pacing.

Pay attention to the connections being made between what Christ did and what his actions are doing to us now.

knows the oppression from Israel firsthand, and has been sent by God to testify to it.

READING II

Letters are the most common form of writing in the New Testament, and they typically follow the conventions of Greco-Roman letters. Beginning with an opening greeting or salutation, most New Testament letters are then followed by a thanksgiving. However, three letters (2 Corinthians, 1 Peter, and Ephesians) insert a Jewish feature, the blessing. It is the blessing in Ephesians that constitutes today's second reading.

The purpose of our transformation in Christ is our salvation and our praise of God that flows from it.

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, 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.

[Shorter: Ephesians 1:3-10 (see brackets)]

GOSPEL Mark 6:7-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

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,

"Whenever 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.

As a refresher, read last week's Gospel, Mark 6:1-6. Just as the disciples would encounter rejection in their proclamation of the Good News, so also did Jesus. Forgoing provisions takes faith. They must rely solely on hospitality, and God's support, for their mission. Emphasize "nothing"

Deliver looking out at the assembly. "Shake the dust off" is still good advice. Do not let rejection mitigate your zeal for your faith.

Conclude with a narrator voice. Ministering with the Spirit's authority is fruitful.

GOSPEL

In Mark 6:1-6, last week's Gospel reading, Jesus returned to Nazareth, where he was rejected by his unbelieving fellow townsfolk. While such disbelief did not diminish Jesus' power to heal, it did limit the scope of his healing and teaching. In today's Gospel, after having already chosen the twelve (Mark 3:14-19) and given them the secret of the kingdom of God (4:10-12), Jesus sends them out, warning them that in some places they too will experience a lack of welcome and that some will refuse to hear the message of repentance.

All three synoptic Gospels recall explicitly charged with preaching the kingdom. Rather, like Jesus himself, they give concrete witness to the kingdom through their actions, miracles, and messages that flow from acceptance and belief. S.L.

Beyond such details, Mark's spare account notes that the twelve receive "authority over unclean spirits," they are advised that repentance, and they are advised that some places will not welcome them or listen to their message. Strikingly, although the mystery of the kingdom of God had been revealed to them earlier, they are not