

FIRST READING: Amos 7:10-17

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos:

Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent word to Jeroboam, king of Israel: "Amos has conspired against you here within Israel; the country cannot endure all his words. For this is what Amos says: Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be exiled from its land." To Amos, Amaziah said: "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.' Now hear the word of the LORD!" You say: prophesy not against Israel, preach not against the house of Isaac. Now thus says the LORD: Your wife shall be made a harlot in the city, and your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; Your land shall be divided by measuring line, and you yourself shall die in an unclean land; Israel shall be exiled far from its land.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

The judgments of the Lord are true, and all of them are just.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye.

The judgments of the Lord are true, and all of them are just.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; The ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just. They are more precious than gold, than a heap of purest gold; Sweeter also than syrup or honey from the comb.

The judgments of the Lord are true, and all of them are just.

Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

After entering a boat, Jesus made the crossing, and came into his own town. And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven." At that, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why do you harbor evil thoughts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"— he then said to the paralytic, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." He rose and went home. When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and glorified God who had given such authority to men.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection for the 13th Thursday of the Year II

Amos' message came down to this; doom will overtake you, death will fill your life, your family will be destroyed and you will die in a foreign land. This is certainly not good news for the people of Israel, the priest Amaziah or king Jeroboam. Amos did not say that repentance will lead to life and a second chance. There was no escape to the nation's destiny to be captured, destroyed and sent into Diaspora. How is this experience in any way salvific? God went with the people into exile. Judaism, today, is a living and thriving world faith. These northern ten tribes were never lost. They remained where they were and brought the God of Abraham to the pagan world.

What are God's judgments and how are they just? God is love; infinite, eternal and unconditional. God has no limits and restraints on compassion and mercy. When God judges us, God sees God reflected in our very being. Having been created in God's image and likeness, the Holy Spirit indwells with us all. Our birth was God's gift. Our life, now, is God's gift and our faith in God is God's gift. God's gift of salvation is ours because of our gift of faith. The sign that we already possess God's gifts is that we can love our selves and each other. And in loving like that, we love God. God is always just; that is, always loving. God's justice is forgiveness.

What was Jesus' home town? Wasn't it Nazareth? That's where Jesus was raised. Nazareth is no where near the Sea of Galilee. As an adult, and throughout much of his ministry, Jesus lived in, or near, Capernaum on the shore of the lake. The residents all knew him. They heard his preaching and had witnessed the signs he performed. In coming to him, Jesus was impressed with the depth of their faith, for likewise he knew them.

For Jesus, their faith led to forgiveness and healing. Faith consists in this, to believe in God and in the one God sent; Jesus, the Son of Man. Salvation through the forgiveness of sins is why the Son of God was born a human being and died on the cross. Today we witnessed Jesus ministry, or service of those who believed in him. They were yet to witness Jesus' cross and resurrection and yet to receive the Holy Spirit, but they gathered in Jesus name and presence. Jesus did not disappoint them. He forgave and healed their paralyzed friend, who was able to walk again in gratitude and in faith.

What can we take from these readings? The Israelis were to be overrun and carried away into captivity. Their kingdom would be wiped away. They would be separated from all they knew and loved never to return home. Sound familiar? Today's is our last mass as the parish of Divine Savior. Tomorrow we become the worship site designated with the same name to avoid confusion. We will remain a worship site until Labor Day, September 5, 2022. After that we will be gone for good.

Yet we do not enter either captivity nor Diaspora. We move, with the people of the former Our Lady Mother and St. Eugene to form a new parish. We will, together, found a new Christian Community not unlike the ones the apostles founded. We face loss and our grief as well as hope and anticipation; all at the same time. We leave for an unknown with apprehension. We arrive in faith, hopeful for Jesus remains with us together as he promised. The Holy Spirit will unite us three as one.

The gospel has told us that Jesus forgave and healed the paralytic because he witnessed the community's shared faith. Jesus has witnessed our faith and knows us fully. He has faith in us. With his loving presence, he will heal us, too, of our grief and doubts. With Jesus' loving presence and the Spirit's steadfast guidance we will not fail. We all come together in Jesus' name as a new parish. With God, we shall overcome.

May our faith be a beacon of hope that guides us to God's Kingdom.

James D. Beath

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