

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Aitkin, Minnesota
July 11, 2021
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Introit

Ps. 143:1–2, 8a; antiphon: Ps. 143:11

For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life!

In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!

Enter not into judgment with your servant,

for no one living is righteous before you.

Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love,

for in you I trust.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning,

is now, and will be forever. Amen.

For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life!

In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

Collect of the Day

P Let us pray. O Lord, You granted Your prophets strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance. Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading

Amos 7:7–15

This is what [the Lord God] showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand.

And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"Behold, I am setting a plumb line

in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them;
the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the
sword."

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said,

"Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land."

And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle

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 heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In

him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Holy Gospel

Mark 6:14–29

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

Apostles' Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father

**Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Sermon Text – Amos 7:7-15

Sermon Theme – “Listen to What the LORD Says”

You have probably heard it said, “Know your enemy.” In the field of sports, this plays out as one sports team studies the films of the other team to learn their plays and identify their strengths and weaknesses. In the business world, a company will study its competitors.

In a much more serious matter, we should know our ultimate enemy; the one we sing about in the hymn “A Mighty Fortress is our God” when we sing: **“The old evil foe Now means deadly woe; Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight”** (LSB 656:1). We should know: What are the aims and goals of the devil? What are his strategies? What are his tactics? Remember what they say, , “Know your enemy.”

Well, the devil wants to see all manner of wickedness. The more wickedness He sees, the happier he is. What he really wants, however, is unbelief. He wants unbelievers to keep on unbelieving. And, He wants believers to stop believing..

The devil’s goal is to keep sinners from hearing the Word of God. He wants to keep us from listening to what the Lord is saying to us. He wants to keep us from taking seriously what the Lord has to say.

How does the old evil foe do that? His tactics are recorded in the Bible. One approach is to come at us with a whole bunch of false voices in an effort to drown out the voice of God. Throughout the history of ancient

Israel, we read of false prophets. Usually these false prophets outnumbered the true prophets. The false prophets tell sinners what they wanted to hear, as a result, they are popular. The question is: "Which voice are we going to listen to, the voice of God or the voice of the devil?"

Another approach is to silence the preachers of God's Word. It is said the prophet Isaiah was sawn in half. The apostle Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified, upside down. Very often the prophets and apostles were pursued and imprisoned. Elijah was constantly threatened. The prophet Jeremiah as well as Paul were often in prison.

As I said, the devil wants to prevent sinners from hearing the true Word of God. One instance is recorded in our text, Amos 7. The year is 760 BC. The place is Bethel, about ten miles north of Jerusalem. When Solomon died, the northern ten tribes separated. We might say, "the north seceded from the union." They were still a part of God's covenant people, though. That's why God raised up prophets like Elijah and Elisha to proclaim His Word. Now it was Amos' turn to proclaim.

Amos was called and sent by the true God to proclaim what the true God had to say. That's why Amos would repeatedly use expressions like: **"Thus spoke Yahweh, the God of Israel"** or **"the utterance of Yahweh."** The true God wanted His Word to be proclaimed and through that Word, the Holy Spirit works. Therefore, Amos kept saying, **"Listen to What the Lord God Almighty Has to Say."**

But the one in authority at the false sanctuary in Bethel did not want the people to hear it. Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, was that one who complained to the king in Samaria about Amos. Amaziah did some spin-doctoring. Amos was announcing God's words of judgment against rebellious Israel, but Amaziah made it out to be a conspiracy against the king, Amaziah said to the king, **"Amos has conspired against you"** (Amos 7:10).

Amaziah, also, discounted what Amos was proclaiming as only words from Amos, invented by Amos to serve the political goals of Amos and the Southern Kingdom. Amaziah reported to King Jeroboam, **"For**

thus Amos has said." Amos had been emphasizing, **"Thus spoke Yahweh, the God of Israel,"** but Amaziah considered it only a human message and human opinion from the man Amos.

The old evil foe tries to prevent sinners from hearing the Word of God. This is one way he does it, by leading people to discount it, ignore it, or dismiss it as simply human speech and human opinion. Amos said, **"Thus spoke God,"** and the opponents say, "No, that's only what you are saying!"

After all that, Amaziah tried to pressure Amos to leave, to go back to his home in Judah: **"O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah"** (Amos 7:12a). Amaziah pretends to be Amos's friend who fears for Amos's life; in truth Amaziah was the one who reported Amos to the king in the first place. The kingdom of darkness is deceitful. Amaziah then goes on to insult Amos by telling him to make his living back in Judah as a prophet for hire: **"Eat bread there, and prophesy there"** (Amos 7:12b), as if Amos were just another self-serving religious guru, feathering his own nest.

As I have said, the kingdom of darkness does not want sinners to hear the true Word of God. It seeks to silence or remove the true prophets. It leads people to discount the Word of God as only self-serving religious talk.. "Don't impose your religion on me," they say. "Keep your religion to yourself."

The kingdom of darkness wants to prevent sinners from hearing the Word of God. How about you? Do you want to hear the Word of God? Or do you find ways to ignore it? Do you dismiss it as being boring? Do you have more important things to do with your time? So many voices are vying for our attention—the TV, the computer, digital devices, etc. We are bombarded by so many voices; sometimes the danger is that we only listen to ourselves.

Remember, "Know your enemy." Your ultimate enemy, *the enemy*, the old evil foe, wants to prevent us from hearing the Word of God. The enemy wants sinners to listen only to themselves.

Amos was called and sent by the Lord God Almighty Himself to proclaim the Lord's words. Amos kept on proclaiming the Word of God. In

fact, in the next two verses, Amos responded to Amaziah's pressure tactics by announcing God's judgment against Amaziah himself. Then Amos repeated his message to all of Israel. The Word of God spoken by Amos was written down and preserved. To this day, now over 2,700 years later, we can still read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word of God spoken by the prophet Amos.

God will not be silenced. God is the God who speaks. We hear Him speaking throughout the Scriptures. The true God speaks in human language so that He can be heard and understood. The true God is not deceitful but open and transparent. The true God reveals His will in clear human language.

To convey His Word, in the Old Testament time, He raised up prophets. He had taken Amos from working as a herdsman and said to him: **"Go, prophesy to my people Israel"** (Amos 7:15). Why was the true God so insistent that His Word be proclaimed, even when it meant His spokesmen would be hunted, imprisoned, and even face death for it?

The true God wants His Word to be preached because through His Word, He leads sinners to repentance. That was why God called Amos. He wanted Israel to turn away from their evil and turn to Him in faith. God's Word of judgment and repentance leads sinners away from their idols and their crooked ways. It reveals that those false ways lead only to death. The false voices only confirm sinners in their sins. Only the Word of the true God can lead sinners out of this endless cycle of sin and death. So Amos announced God's coming judgment against sinners.. God sent Amos to move Israel from its sinful ways.

Why does God go to such a bother to have His Word proclaimed? It is because through His Word He creates and sustains faith. That's why we need to "Listen to What the Lord God Almighty Has to Say."

Well, what happened? Sure enough, ancient Israel rejected the Word of God spoken by the true prophets and listened only to themselves. They brought God's judgment down upon themselves. In the 700s BC, God raised up the Assyrians, who came and destroyed the Northern Kingdom and most of the Southern Kingdom. Then a century later, God

raised up the ancient Babylonians to destroy even Jerusalem. The death sentence came down on Israel just as Amos had announced. God does not deceive like other voices. What God says is truth.

But that was not the end of the story. God through his prophet Amos also spoke a promise, the sure and certain promise that one day, God would reverse the judgment. In Amos 9:11–15, God promised that He would raise up a new and greater king. God would restore His people Israel. God would also incorporate the Gentiles into His future kingdom.

In the fullness of time, this promise was fulfilled by God. Jesus of Nazareth is the new and greater King.. Jesus came as the new and greater Prophet, and like the prophets of old, He was rejected. Sinners wanted to listen only to themselves, even though He proclaimed the truth. Jesus embodied Israel and went through death just like Old Testament Israel. Only He died a more severe death by suffering the just punishment of God against Israel and against all sinners. The God of Israel laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Jesus, the King, suffered in the place of sinners and for sinners. He suffered in your place and for you. But then God raised Him up bodily, just as He promised through Amos when he said, **“I will raise up the booth of David”** (9:11).

Now God is at work through His Word. Listen to what the Lord God Almighty has to say. Only His Word can lead you to repentance. Only His Word can sustain faith in your heart. Only His Word can lead you to eternal life. Despite so many confusing voices (including your own), listen to what the Lord God Almighty has to say. AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

Prayer of the Church

Preserve Your Church, O Lord, for Your name’s sake, in Your righteousness and answering in Your faithfulness. Since You have sent us forth in this world to testify to Your Word, let us find

conviction and confidence in our confession, that salvation is found in the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus alone.

Sustain the preachers You send, O Lord. Make them bold to proclaim Your Law against sin, and grant that Your Spirit would work powerfully in that Word to humble the proud and bring them to repentance, that they would hear the Gospel and receive the forgiveness of sins won for them by Christ. Vindicate all who suffer for continuing steadfast in their callings, and keep us from despising Your Word of correction. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Preserve Your blessed estate of marriage, O Lord. Let chastity be prized among Your Christians and honored also in the world. Bind husband and wife together in love and forgiveness. Equip them by Your Spirit with every good gift to care for and teach the children You give.

You, O Lord, are King over all the earth. You bring ruin on wicked nations and their rulers and are no respecter of persons. Spare our nation and its leaders, O Lord. Let the conduct of our civil servants and of our people be wise, just, honorable and in accord with Your revealed will. For the sake of Christ, be merciful to those who oppose You, and remember that You desire all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Emboldened by our adoption through Jesus Christ, O Father, we bring before You every need of body and soul. Lavish the riches of Your grace on _____.

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

- C **Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation; but deliver
us from evil.**
- For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Benediction

- P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to
you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you
peace.
- C **Amen**

Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book
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