

Sunday, July 10, 2022 – Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind is to reflect God's mercy in responding to one's neighbour. That mercy found its most profound expression in the "gospel that has come to you"—namely the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That gospel mercy comes to us again today: at the font, at the table, and from the pulpit. It is very near to you.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, your mercy delights us, and the world longs for your loving care. Hear the cries of everyone in need, and turn our hearts to love our neighbors with the love of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Amos 7:7-17

Amos, a shepherd from the southern village of Tekoa, is called by God to preach against Israel, the Northern Kingdom, in a time of economic prosperity. Today's reading illustrates how Amos's stinging criticism of Israel alienated him from those in authority, including King Jeroboam and the priest Amaziah.

⁷This is what [the Lord GOD] showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"See, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass them by;

⁹the 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."

¹⁰Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹For thus Amos has said,

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

¹²And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; ¹³but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

¹⁴Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, ¹⁵and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

¹⁶“Now therefore hear the word of the LORD.
You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel,
and do not preach against the house of Isaac.’

¹⁷Therefore thus says the LORD:
‘Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword,
and your land shall be parceled out by line;
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,
and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.’”

Psalm 82

¹God stands to charge the divine coun- | cil assembled,
giving judgment in the midst | of the gods:

²“**How long will you | judge unjustly,
and show favor | to the wicked?**

³Save the weak | and the orphan;
defend the hum- | ble and needy;

⁴**rescue the weak | and the poor;
deliver them from the power | of the wicked.**

⁵They do not know, neither do they understand; they wander a- | bout in darkness;
all the foundations of the | earth are shaken.

⁶**Now I say to you, | ‘You are gods,
and all of you children of | the Most High;**

⁷nevertheless, you shall | die like mortals,
and fall like | any prince.’”

⁸**Arise, O God, and | rule the earth,
for you shall take all nations | for your own.**

Second Reading: Colossians 1:1-14

The letter to the Colossians was written to warn its readers of various false teachings. The first part of the letter is an expression of thanks for the faith, hope, and love that mark this community, including a prayer for strength and courage.

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

²To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

³In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,

⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel ⁶that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. ⁷This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. ¹¹May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

Jesus is challenged to explain what is involved in obeying the greatest commandment. He tells a parable rich in surprises: those expected to show pity display hard hearts while the lowly give and receive unexpected and lavish mercy.

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Prayers of Intercession

United in Christ and guided by the Spirit, we pray for the church, the creation, and all in need, saying “God of grace” and responding, “hear our prayer.”

A brief silence.

Good and gracious God, you have placed your word of love in the heart of your church. Fill your church with compassion, that we bear the fruit of your healing mercy to a broken world. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You created the earth with seeds sprouting up to new life. We pray for the flourishing of fruit trees and orchards, vines and bushes. Prosper the work of those who plant, tend, harvest, and gather. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Show us your ways and teach us your paths of justice and love. Raise up community and national leaders to challenge and dismantle societal structures that perpetuate ethnic, racial, and religious profiling and discrimination. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Come near to all in need. Orchestrate kindness in the face of cruelty, hope where there is despair, love in the face of neglect, comfort where there is death, and healing in illness (*especially those who we name at this time, aloud or silently on our hearts...*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Turn this community toward neighbours in need. Bring aid and support to those who are poor, beaten down, abused, forgotten, silenced, or avoided (*local outreach ministries may be named*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the saints who revealed your love and mercy in this life. Inspired by their witness, strengthen us to live in hope. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of every time and place, in Jesus' name and filled with your Holy Spirit, we entrust these spoken prayers and those in our hearts into your holy keeping.

Amen.

A reflection for this Fifth Sunday after Pentecost...

Who Are You?

Who do you identify with in the parable? This is part of what makes parables so powerful. Some days we read the story through the eyes of the priest or the Levite. Some days we feel like the Samaritan. And then there are those days when we are the man in the ditch. Some days you are the windshield and some days you are the bug, as the saying goes.

It is easy to miss the shocking nature of this parable if we start to think that this story only teaches us to imitate the Samaritan. The parable says so much more about God, our relationship to God, and the lengths to which God will go to reach out to us.

Through the image of the Samaritan, Jesus lifts up a surprising rescuer as an image of the God who relentlessly cares for those in need. Could it be that we are meant to identify not with the Samaritan or even the lawyer to whom Jesus speaks the parable, but rather with the man who is hopeless and left for dead? Could it be that Christ is the good Samaritan who embraces us with the tender compassion of God?

All of the sudden the parable is turned on its head. Jesus is not just giving us a comfortable morality tale reminding us to be nice, helpful, generous people. Instead Jesus is proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. God's grace comes to us through the cross. God's grace comes to us even—and especially—when we are at our worst, when we struggle in the depths and cry out for help. Even when we cannot or will not cry out, mercy and grace come into our lives through Jesus. So whether you are on the road or in the ditch, Jesus even now is coming for you.

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