

Sunday, July 17, 2022 – Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

Perhaps the church, at its best, is “all ears.” God urges the faithful, again and again, to “listen up!”—to heed the word that gives life. So it was with Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Martha, and the early church at Colossae. So it is today as we join the assembly to hear the word of God, the word of life.

Prayer of the Day

Eternal God, you draw near to us in Christ, and you make yourself our guest. Amid the cares of our lives, make us attentive to your presence, that we may treasure your word above all else, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Amos 8:1-12

Amos announces God's judgment upon the people of Israel who sin by oppressing the poor and engaging in deceitful business practices. Amos uses a Hebrew wordplay: a basket of summer fruit (qayits) symbolizes the end (qets) of Israel. That end will come through a famine of “hearing the words of the LORD.”

¹This is what the Lord GOD showed me—a basket of summer fruit. ²He said, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me,

“The end has come upon my people Israel;
I will never again pass them by.

³The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,”
says the Lord GOD;
“the dead bodies shall be many,
cast out in every place. Be silent!”

⁴Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,

⁵saying, “When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?

We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practice deceit with false balances,

⁶buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”

⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

⁸Shall not the land tremble on this account,
and everyone mourn who lives in it,
and all of it rise like the Nile,
and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?

⁹On that day, says the Lord GOD,
I will make the sun go down at noon,
and darken the earth in broad daylight.

¹⁰I will turn your feasts into mourning,
and all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on all loins,
and baldness on every head;
I will make it like the mourning for an only son,
and the end of it like a bitter day.

¹¹The time is surely coming, says the Lord GOD,
when I will send a famine on the land;
not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the LORD.

¹²They shall wander from sea to sea,
and from north to east;
they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD,
but they shall not find it.

Psalm 52

¹You mighty, why do you | boast of wickedness
against the godly | all day long?

²**Continually | you plot ruin;
your tongue is like a sharpened razor that com- | mits deceit.**

³You love evil | more than good
and lying more than speak- | ing the truth.

⁴**You love all words | that devour,
O you de- | ceitful tongue.**

⁵Oh, that God would demol- | ish you utterly,
topple you, and snatch you from your dwelling, and root you out of the land | of the living!

**⁶The righteous shall see | and be awestruck,
and they shall laugh | at you, saying,**

⁷“This is the one who did not take God | for a refuge,
but trusted in great wealth and found strength | in destruction.”

**⁸But I am like a green olive tree in the | house of God;
I trust in the steadfast love of God forev- | er and ever.**

⁹I will thank you forever for what | you have done;
in the presence of the faithful I will long for your name, for | it is good.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:15-28

This letter offers a mystical teaching, that the great mystery of God is “Christ in you.” Because Christ is present in the church, Christians share in his life, suffering, and glory.

¹⁵[Christ Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

²¹And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—²³provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

²⁴I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵I became its servant according to God’s commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42

During his visit to the home of Mary and Martha, Jesus reminds Martha that her concern for her many tasks distracts from the one thing that precedes all else: abiding in the presence of God.

³⁸Now as [Jesus and his disciples] went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

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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.

Ever-present God, in Christ you fill all things. As your church gathers to hear your word, share your meal, and receive your blessing, teach us to welcome strangers as we have been welcomed by you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Through Christ you created all things, visible and invisible. Teach humankind to honor and protect all creation, including living things that remain hidden from our eyes such as air, atmosphere, molecules, and microscopic creatures. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Through Christ you reconcile all things. Motivate those in power to end enslavement, dehumanization, or brutality of any kind (*in the spirit of Bartolomé de Las Casas, whom we commemorate today*) and to protect and improve the lives of Indigenous peoples. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Through Christ you bring peace. Assure all who are worried and distracted by many things of your constant presence. Soothe those suffering in mind, body, or spirit. Sustain all who are afflicted and those who serve as caregivers (*especially*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

In Christ you make your word fully known. Inspire this worshiping community (*congregation may be named*) to abide fully in your word as we sit at the feet of Jesus. Bless the ministry of teachers and Bible study leaders. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

In Christ you brought forth the firstborn from the dead. We give thanks for the saints you have gathered at your table. Gather us with them in your eternal glory. 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 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost...

Unexpected and Intentional Distraction

As digital tablets and smart phones keep us busy and on the go, today's gospel reminds us of a struggle: when are we to set aside our busy calendars, duties, and to-do lists and simply rest in God's presence, listening to what God has to say to us? This tension mounts in our gospel as Jesus addresses Martha's busyness, worry, and distraction, juxtaposed with Mary's contemplation, focus, and desire to sit at the feet of the great teacher. But is "quietly sitting" even possible in our age of distractions? Perhaps we can find helpful advice in our first reading, as Abraham rests in the heat of the day. In that time of rest, he was ready to receive the three guests who came bearing the news that Sarah would have a son, fulfilling God's promise given years earlier. With the heat keeping him from moving on to other things, the guests had Abraham's undivided attention. These readings remind us how crucial it is to set aside time to spend with God. We might even wonder what sort of things Jesus was saying to Mary. Were they profound words, akin to the "mystery" the author of Colossians addresses in the epistle? Jesus was the person in whom God was pleased to dwell, that same one who is "the hope of glory."

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