

8 S. after Pentecost 7/14/24
 Mark 6:14-29 10B

SERMON TEXT IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON, FROM THE 6TH CHAPTER OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Every Sunday, the Collect of the Day is printed in the bulletin. We would probably be inclined to call it a "prayer," but it's called the "Collect" because it collects, summarizes, the theme or the focus of our worship for that Sunday. Look at how spot on our Collect is for this Sunday:

"Oh Lord you granted your prophets (meaning Amos and the last Old Testament Prophet, John the Baptist) strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance. Give us pure hearts and minds (meaning you and me, as we feebly struggle today in the Church Militant) to follow your Son faithfully even into suffering and death."

That summarizes what it means for us to follow Jesus in a world of perversity. We are called to make disciples by proclaiming the Gospel, all that Jesus has taught us. So we pray, that we may have pure hearts and minds to follow in the footsteps of John, proclaiming the eternal Gospel and being faithful even unto death.

We need to pray for that because in these last days itching ears don't always want to hear what Jesus has to say. And, that's nothing new. Look at King Herod in our lesson.

You know the story of Herod, right? But, the rest of the story of our radio host of yesterday would say **WAS THAT BROTHER PHILIP WAS VERY MUCH ALIVE**. Yes, this was not a case of a widow falling in love with a bachelor brother or some such thing. Remember the 9th Commandment? The 10th Commandment? Those are the ones about coveting, having a holy, God-pleasing heart. Herod did not have a holy heart. He wanted what God forbid. The 6th Commandment is the one

that's easy to remember because it's about sex. Six :: sex. And, that's what Herod and Herodias wanted. They could have cared less what God wanted.

But before you beat up on ol' Herod too much, I invite you to take a look at your life in the mirror of God's Law. God says, "You shall have no other gods." We say, "I will create a god in my image; a grandfatherly kind of god who will wick and nod at my sin, and say its ok. God says, "You shall not murder." We would never think of ending someone's physical life, but we keep a record of wrongs our neighbor has done, bear grudges, and refuse to be reconciled. God says, "You shall not commit adultery," but we laugh our silly heads off at jokes. God says, "You shall not steal," but we see nothing wrong with trying to get rich by playing the lottery. God says, "You shall not give testimony against your neighbor," but we defame and slander our neighbor, especially when it makes us look all-the-better.

The 10 Commandments teach us what God's thoughts are, how He wants us to live our lives. Are God's thoughts your thoughts? Are His ways your ways? Or, do you just live and think and believe what you want? The sad truth is we seek peace and security, contentment, in what we want.

II. But, God has good news for us who live as we want. Paul says this in our Epistle lesson,

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...In love, He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ...In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses (vv. 3, 5, 7)

The very Son of God redeemed us. That means He bought our freedom from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Jesus paid our

redemption price not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. All those times you put what you wanted before what God wanted for you; all your sin was laid on Jesus. And, like a lamb to the slaughter, He, the Lamb of God, was led to the slaughter of the cross, shedding His blood to atone for your sin and dying as the punishment for your sin. And because He did, Be of Good Cheer, for you are forgiven.

III. In the new birth of our baptism, God the Holy Spirit works faith and new spiritual life in us with the power to overcome sin. This is why we pray this Sunday, "Give us **pure hearts and minds** to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death..." God hears and God does give us pure hearts and minds to faithfully follow Jesus **through the means of grace**. The means of grace, the spoken Word of the Gospel and the Visible Word of the Sacraments, are the means God Himself has chosen to give us faith and keep that faith strong so that we may live for Christ and not for the selfish desires of the flesh.

Our human reason and Satan with his lies say that baptism is just plain water, a work of man. But, the Word of God teaches us that this is not just plain water, but water included in God's command and combined with God's Word. That is why every day of our earthly life, we return to the waters of our baptism to drown our sinful flesh with all sinful and unholy desires that we may rise to live before God in righteousness and purity each day.

Our human reason and Satan with his lies say that going to church is boring, a waste of time, especially in these summer months. No, Dear Saints of God, we come to the worship services of God's House because here God serves us with His Word, teaching us of Christ and teaching us

what a holy life in Christ is, and strengthening us to live that holy life in Christ.

Here, we come to the Lord's Table. Our human reason and Satan with his lies say this is nothing more than bread and wine. But, the Word of God teaches us that in, with, and under the bread and wine is the true Body and Blood of Jesus given for us to eat and to drink, for the forgiveness of sins, and "where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

In our Old Testament lesson, God gives the Prophet Amos a vision in which God says, "*Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never pass by them (v.8).*" That is the way our English translation reads. But, what God is really saying through Amos is "*Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never forgive them.*"

God is calling the nation of Israel to repentance through Amos. The Golden Age of Israel under David and Solomon was long past. But, life was pretty good. Israel had victory over her enemies. People were enjoying affluence, not going hungry – in fact, they had meat to eat, alcohol abuse was widespread, sexual immorality was common. People were living the way they wanted; not the way God wanted them to live.

So, through Amos, God using the example of a plumb line, a dividing line, between the Israelites who lived the way they wanted and those who feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. Those who lived their own way, ignoring God, were the ones God would forgive no more.

Dear Saints of God, the Christian life is the life of **repentance**. That plumb line is still there for you today! Is it your life to live the way you want? Or, are you Christ's own, serving Him in everlasting righteousness,

innocence, and blessedness; faithful in your use of the means of grace that He may continue His work in you?

Let me ask you the question this way: In what do you hope: the lottery ticket or your baptism certificate? What do you use your computer for? Defaming your neighbor on social media, or reading a daily devotion [like on the Lutheran Hour Ministries website]? Do you use your ability to speak to tell you spouse or child that they are stupid or that you love them?

The green paraments of Pentecost remind us that we daily die to sin and grow more like Jesus. Living in Christ and with Christ at work in us, with His pure heart and mind as our very own, we use every opportunity to thank and praise, serve and obey Him, because God has created us, redeemed us, and sanctified us. We are not our own. We are God's, this day and forever.