



### Introduction

*When Amos reports his vision of God judging Israel for its mistreatment of the poor, he becomes a threat to the power of the priests and the king. John the Baptist also speaks truth to power, and Herod has him killed. In Herod's fear that Jesus is John returned from the dead, we may hear hope for the oppressed: all the prophets killed through the ages are alive in Jesus. We are called to witness to justice in company with them, and to proclaim God's saving love.*

### Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone.

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and one another.

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.**

**We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.**

**We have not loved you with our whole heart;**

**we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.**

**For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.**

**Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,**

**so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

In the name of † Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 853 / LBW # 546

*When Morning Gilds the Skies*

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

### **Prayer of the Day**

O God, from you come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works. Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments; and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

### **First Reading: Amos 7:7-15**

*Amos is not the kind of prophet attached to temples or royal courts. Rather, he is an ordinary farmer from Judah (the southern kingdom) called by God to speak to Israel (the northern kingdom). God's word of judgment through Amos conflicts with the king's court prophet Amaziah, whom Amos encounters at Bethel.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

### **Psalm 85:8-13**

- <sup>8</sup>I will listen to what the LORD God is saying;  
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.
- <sup>9</sup>**Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,  
that your glory may dwell in our land.**
- <sup>10</sup>Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- <sup>11</sup>**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,  
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**
- <sup>12</sup>The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,  
and our land will yield its increase.
- <sup>13</sup>**Righteousness shall go before the LORD  
and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

### **Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14**

*In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## **Gospel Mark 6:14-29**

*As Jesus and his disciples begin to attract attention, Mark recalls the story of John the Baptist's martyrdom. Like John, Jesus and his disciples will also suffer at the hands of those opposed to the gospel of salvation.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

### **Reflection on the Text**

Sometimes when we come across a passage in the Gospels, we wonder what is the Good News here, especially when the passages are broken up the way the lectionary does. What is the writer trying to tell us? How does this scripture reading help us on our journeys through life with God?

For me at least, this is one of those passages. What is God calling us to think about? What is the comfort? What is the lesson?

The reading from Mark last week tells us of the disciples being sent out by two to tell the Good News to the region. Next week, we will read and hear about the disciples coming back to Jesus with what they have seen, heard, and done.

So, how does the story of John's death tie in with the readings on either side? If you look at the beginning of today's Gospel reading, you will read that Jesus' name had become known to Herod and his palace. The scholars think that Herod is hearing about Jesus because of Jesus' travels. On top of that, the disciples had gone out and shared the news about Jesus. Herod started worrying that Jesus might be John the Baptist come back to life.

Now let's look at John's history. John first appears in the wilderness, proclaiming that God is at hand and telling everyone to repent. We also know that John baptized Jesus, as we read in the first chapter of Mark. A similar account is recorded in Matthew.

In Luke's Gospel, we learn that John is born to a family of priests. John's father was a priest who served at the temple on a regular schedule. John's mother Elizabeth and Jesus' mother Mary are cousins. We are told that John jumps with joy while still in his mother's womb when he hears Mary's voice. Thus begins the lifelong bond between the two men.

John, who is a few months older than Jesus, grew up to be an itinerant preacher and prophet. It is speculated that John was a member of a Jewish group called the Essenes. They believed in living a life that was separate from the mainline life of the time. Very similar to a Christian monastery or convent. People devoted to a religious life that points towards God and is not a part of everyday life.

In today's scenario, John had repeatedly pointed out the unfavorable things that Herod had done and called for him to repent. John's call for repentance was aimed specifically at Herod, but could be aimed at society in general, as well.

John the Baptizer was seen as a disturbance to all those in power, and especially Herod and his family. That is why John is killed. John's focus was on doing what God called him to, and that interfered with Herod's plans.

As we see, John spent his life pointing to God and to Jesus in particular. The story of John demonstrates that following Jesus is not always easy. It can even be dangerous. Thankfully, we do not see that much here in the U.S. Yet there are still dangers and death for Christians in other parts of the world.

So, why follow Jesus? Why would we follow Jesus today? If you are like me, you are still wondering where is the Good News?

The death of John is important and sad. But it is not the final word in all of this.

John knew some of the Good News that we have now. John knew that God loved the people of the time. We know God love us as well, even to the point of Jesus dying on the cross. Jesus was buried and at Easter rose from the dead. As we remember from a few weeks ago, Jesus ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit came to the disciples as little flames.

God still lives; God still participates in this world. The God that John pointed to throughout his life is still here and active. As we hear in Ephesians, we are adopted as God's children through Christ's life, death, and resurrection. There is more to life than pain and death.

Through Christ's actions, we have been redeemed before God the Father. God's love and mercy has been active in the past and continues to be active beyond any point we can see.

You and I see the difficulties here and now. We feel the pain of life. Yet God also shares his joy and peace with us throughout life here and in the life afterwards. Just look at the smile or a hug from a child. The call of friend or family member checking up on you. God's joy is everywhere.

Now what? Have faith in God's promise of loving us. Have faith that we are forgiven through our confession. Have faith that we are always being pulled into sharing God's love with God and with each other. Just like the disciples last week, we are encouraged to share the Good News of Jesus to the world around us. Have faith in being a child of God, live into the gifts and love that God has given each of us.

From Ephesians: *"In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit..."*

Or in other words, we belong to God. Rest in the truth that no matter what happens here on earth, we are in God's hands. Amen

**Hymn of the Day ELW 596 / LBW 293 *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

**Apostles' Creed**

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**Prayers of Intercession**

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

*A brief silence.*

Holy parent, you welcome your people into one family and gather all things to yourself. Bestow your grace upon your beloved church, lavish your wisdom upon us, and redeem us from our faults, that by our witness all might praise your glory.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Awesome Creator, you steadfastly tend to the smallest of seeds and the mightiest of sycamore trees. Spring up green growth from the earth, nourish the growth of fruit, grain, and other crops, and bless the work of farmers and laborers.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the oppressed, turn the ears of those who are in power to the voices of prophets in our own day. Protect those who speak difficult truths when it is risky to do so.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of strength, you are near to those who endure difficulty. Comfort all who are survivors of violence, guard the refugee and the immigrant, and protect all those who are victims of prejudice and discrimination. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of love, we pray for this holy house and all those who worship here. We pray especially for those whose efforts behind the scenes often go unnoticed, and for all who volunteer in any way. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We thank you, God, for the saints, martyrs, and prophets who have died in the faith. We remember those in this community who have recently died. United with them as God's children, assure us that we are yours forever. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.**

**Sending Hymn ELW # 545 / LBW # 259 *Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*