

# Proper 10



July 13, 2003

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Amos 7:7-15

{7} This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. {8} And 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; {9} 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." {10} Then 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. {11} For thus Amos has said, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'" {12} And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; {13} but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." {14} Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, {15} and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

Yahweh twice showed Amos a vision of destruction for Israel (7:1-3; 4-6). Amos pleads for Israel and Yahweh relented. 7:7-9 relate a third vision against Israel.

7-8: A plumb line (a string with a weight on one end) is used to provide a reference line to keep a stone or brick wall vertical. Israel is evaluated like a wall, and like a wall that is not vertical Israel will be torn down.

*my people Israel:* The northern kingdom.

*I will never again pass them by:* In the first two episodes Yahweh repented on the basis of Amos's pleading and passed by. Here Yahweh declares his intent to fulfill his judgment against his people, Israel.

9: The threat against Israel is made specific against the sanctuaries and the royal house.

10. *Amaziah, the priest of Bethel:* Dan and Bethel were the two sanctuaries of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12:29-30). "The N sanctuary at Dan never seemed to be the equal of Bethel. Bethel was still the king's sanctuary as late as Amos." [1]

*Amos has conspired against you:* The word "conspired" "is also used with reference to Jehu's revolt (2 Kgs 10:9), which was Jeroboam II's family. The charge is serious: a conspiracy to revolt led by a Judean within Israel itself was not tolerable.

11: Amaziah quotes a supposed prophecy of Amos against the king and the nation. It is probably a summary of what Amos said less explicitly by telling what Yahweh had shown him earlier in the chapter.

12-13: Amaziah tells Amos to go back to Judah and earn a living there, and not prophesy in Israel. This is the quintessential appeal against "outside agitators."

14-15: "The first part of his answer points out that neither his right to function as a prophet nor his right to earn a livelihood thereby is pertinent to the discussion; the sole issue is rather Yahweh's precise commission. he focuses attention upon the one under whose authority stand all concerned." [2]

## Psalm 85:8-13

{8} Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. {9} Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. {10} Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. {11} Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. {12} The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. {13} Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

"The praying assembly waits for Yahweh's answer to its praying and pleading [verses 4-7]. This is transmitted in the form of a priestly or prophetic oracle of salvation. The speaker of Ps. 85:8ff. is a [*shalom*]-prophet (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; Isa. 57:19) [3]. The speaker in Psalm 85 is caught up in the continuing effect of the salvific message of Deutero-Isaiah. The criticism practiced, for instance, in Jeremiah and the degrading of the [*shalom*]-prophets cannot be permitted to lead to discrediting the inspiration of these men on principle." [4]

8-13: "In vv.8ff. we have a prophetic message overheard in the framework of worship; and transmitted in a solemn ritual. The prophet officiating in worship announces the services of a mediator; he is ready to listen. The speaker of Ps. 85:8ff. is a [*shalom*] prophet (cf. Jer. 6:14; 8:11; Isa. 57:19)." [5] "For the NT community the ecclesiological meaning of the psalm for the wandering people of God is evident. Psalm 85 stands between salvation accomplished and future, final salvation." [6]

10. *steadfast love and faithfulness* *righteousness and peace*: These are characteristics of both covenant partners in their relationship with each other. This is in contrast to the faithless in Israel who will bear the wrath of Yahweh.

In context with the first lesson, this prophecy is for those who are faithful to Yahweh. To them the Lord "will give what is good."


## Ephesians 1:3-14


{3} 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, {4} just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. {5} He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, {6} to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. {7} In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace {8} that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight {9} he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, {10} as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. {11} In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, {12} so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. {13} 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; {14} this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

3: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. A relatively frequent blessing of God. See 1 Peter 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 1:3. Commenting on the phrase in 2 Corinthians Victor Paul Furnish writes, "it is probably better to take the initial blessing of God as an independent benediction. In this case the intervening *kai* ["and"] may be translated as in *KJV*, *even* the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or else perhaps preferably omitted altogether. the God who is blessed is none other than the one believers know as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ"

4: *he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world*. Not even of Israel is it said that she was chosen "before the foundation of the world." Jesus is loved by God, *before the foundation of the world* (John 17:24). He was destined to be the lamb of God *before the*





*foundation of the world*, and was only revealed later. [7]

7: *we have redemption*  *the forgiveness of our trespasses*. Cf. Colossians 1:14 for a similar statement.




9: *the mystery of his will*. God  s will is not plain for all to see; it is concealed in the ordinary.

### Mark 6:14-29

{14} King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." {15} But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." {16} But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." {17} For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. {18} For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." {19} And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, {20} for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. {21} But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. {22} When his daughter Herodias 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." {23} And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." {24} She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." {25} Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." {26} The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. {27} Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, {28} brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. {29} When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

14. *King Herod*: This is Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, before whom Jesus appeared at his trial. He was Tetrarch Galilee and Perea from 4 bc to 39 ad. "His ambition to be king led to his banishment in a.d. 39 under Caligula . Mark  s use of [*ho basileis* = "the king"] in this story  may reflect local custom .



 [8]

16. *Herod  said,  John, whom I beheaded, has been raised. *. This identification of Jesus introduces the story of the death of John the Baptist.

17-28: "Dancing, most commonly done at weddings, is often quite erotic and usually done only for extended kin. Here officers and the leading men of Galilee are present. In non-elite eyes, honorable males would not allow a female family member to perform such a display; their failure to prevent her from doing so pegs them as shameless. It is also shameful for any man to be bewitched by the proverbial sensuality of a woman in public. Since the maximum a woman could receive was only half of what a man was worth, Herod offered everything he could. The oath made by Herod was made in front of guests. He was therefore honor-bound to keep his word. Had he not done so, his officers would no longer have trusted him." [9]

23. *even half my kingdom*: Cf. Ester 4:3; 7:2. "Since the maximum a woman could receive was only half of what a man was worth, Herod offered everything he could." [10]

26. *he did not wish to refuse*: "Could Pharisees present not have urged him to release himself from his oath? The actual wording of Mk vi.26 strongly suggests (Mt xiv.9 does not) that attempts to persuade him were actually made." [11]

29: John  s disciples treat John  s body with respect. He was probably buried near Machaerus, the fortress of Herod where John was beheaded according to Josephus.

### Reflection

The lessons for each Sunday in the season of Pentecost explore how the gift of the Holy Spirit expresses itself in the life of the Christian.

Both Amos and John faithfully spoke the word of the Lord in spite of the danger to them from powerful rulers. Like them we have been called to be witnesses to the truth of the gospel and have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. Of course it is dangerous to confront rulers, and even neighbors, if their behavior is contrary to God's will.

It would be tempting to call attention to the marital problems of Herod, and current parallels are not obscure. However, moral lapses are not the primary issue for the faithful witness. Amos did not charge Jeroboam with marital infidelity. He charged both king and people with faithlessness to the will of God, reflected in their corrupt worship and disinterest in the plight of the needy. The Spirit-filled Christian lives out his/her destiny as the adopted child of God, and witnesses faithfully to the righteousness of God.

## Hymns [12]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

191 --E--Praise and Thanksgiving

396 --D--O God, O Lord

32 --P--Fling Wide the

727s --P--The King of Glory

631v --P--Lift Up Your Heads

630v --P--Light One Candle

483 --II--God Moves in

693v --II--Baptized in (759s)

178 --G--By All Your

399, 294, 300, 374

## Prayers of the People [13]

We celebrate, Heavenly Father, our baptism into Christ from whom we inherit your blessing and purpose. We praise and thank you for giving us everything we need, every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Guide us by the Holy Spirit to fulfill that inheritance and promise. God who gives us identity and purpose hear our prayer.

Give energy and understanding, wisdom and insight to the teachers of our church; those in seminaries, those in our schools, and those who week by week prepare, shape and influence the lives of our children, our confirmands and the adults of our church through education programs. Bless and encourage especially the meeting of the North American Association for the Catechumenate in Toronto. God who gives us identity and purpose hear our prayer.

## Or [14]

*Presider or deacon*

Let us dance before the Lord with all our might and offer prayers for all peoples in every place.

*Deacon or other leader*

For *N* our bishop and *N* our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

For mercy, justice, and peace in the world.

For farmers and a good harvest, for those on vacation, and for safety from violent storms.

For all who thirst and hunger: the sick and the dying, the poor and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, and for their families.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

For ourselves, our families and companions, and all those we love.

Lifting our voices with all creation, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hear the prayers we offer this day and grant us our inheritance as your own people; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Notes

[1] J.L. Kelso, *✠Bethel (Sanctuary)✠*, George Arthur Buttrick, ed. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Abingdon Press, 1962, Vol. 1, p. 392.

[2] Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p. 312.

[3] A *✠shalom-prophet✠* in this context is a prophet who tells the king or the priests or the people what they want to hear, that Yahweh will not permit harm to come to them no matter what they do, that he will overlook their transgressions and disloyalty.

[4] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, pp. 176f.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[7] Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians: Translated with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, (Second edition). New York: Doubleday, 1984, p. 109.

[8] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1955, p. 308.

[9] Bruce Malina & Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 216f.

[10] *Loc. cit.*

[11] J.D.M. Derrett, *✠Herod's Oath and the Baptist's Head✠*, *Law in the New Testament*, London, 1970, p. 349. Derrett discusses a number of issues with respect to Herod's oath such as whether it was binding, penalties for failing to fulfill a vow, how one might be released from a vow, and so on.

[12] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rc1b9900.txt>

[13] [http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray\\_b2.txt](http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt)

[14] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>