

7/12/09

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Lord God Almighty, we are bound by our sinful natures and struggle with our sin, even when we want to do your will. Forgive us our sin, strengthen us for obedient service, and lead us humbly in faith and thanks for your love for us in Jesus. We pray through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Amos 7:7-15

(Amos will not be hindered from his prophetic call.)

7 This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied.

Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. 9 "The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam."

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. 11 For this is what Amos is saying: "Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land."

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. 13 Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom."

14 Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. 15 But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

THE EPISTLE LESSON Ephesians 1:3-14

(In Christ we have redemption, forgiveness, and all the heavenly blessings!)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the

gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.

THE GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 6:14-29

(King Herod corrupts his authority and beheads John the Baptist.)

14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." 16 But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" 17 For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married.

18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, 20 because **Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.** 21 Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." 23 And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. 25 At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. **27 So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head.** The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28 and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother.

29 On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

THE SERMON

God's help when we are Sinful"Mark 6

INTRO - This summer's sermon series, "God's Help for the Journey of Life" has been based on the assigned Bible readings, but today's reading on the death of John the Baptist may seem a challenge for finding help. Nonetheless, let's think about it in the following way.

About 30 or 40 years ago there was a commercial for Frito's potato chips that many of the older people here will recognize. "Bet you can't eat just one." And you know, in many ways it was true, at least I thought so. I loved those chips. Whether or not I could have eaten just one I don't know, because I never tried.

I. Have you ever had something that you want to keep from doing, but you had trouble doing what was right?

A. I've heard that sometimes from children who have said, "I don't want to be like my mom, I don't want to be like my dad.

1. Sometimes it is a kid thing. I felt that way once when I was frustrated by the guidance of my parents. But as I grew older I realized how good a job my parents had done.

2. Sometimes parents do have behaviors that could be improved.

3. Still, as children grow into adults what is it adults often say. "I'm becoming my mom. I'm becoming my dad."

4. Sometimes behavior we don't want seems to follow us.

B. In our lesson for today Herod the king seems to have acted like the rest of his family, perhaps in spite of himself..

1. The Herod in this account is not the Herod who was alive when Jesus was born and ordered the children killed. That person was Herod the Great. He was known as the most wicked of the Herods.

2. The Herod in this Bible account was another part of Herod's family. He actually seemed to have a desire to do right, but, didn't seem able to fight his family genes.

3. Look with me at our Bible verse.

A. According to verses 17 and 18 Herod arrested John for pointing to Herod's adultery.

B. According to verse 20 Herod knew John was a righteous man, and enjoyed listening to him. But, Herod's unfaithfulness, his idolatry, his worship of self showed through,

because He did not act on what His heart knew was best.

C. When Herod was requested by his wife and daughter, even knowing John was righteous and not wanting to do it, he still had John beheaded, and committed murder.

4. You can't almost read through the lines and see this man, this king, wanting to do right, but he seemed not to be able to help himself. His family had been sinful, and he was too.

C. Unfortunately, we are in a similar situation.

1. God made us to be his children to live in his love, in faithfulness and obedience. But we often want to follow our own desires, and don't act as God's children should.

2. People think that sin is an old fashioned notion. We've talked this summer about needing God's help. But, the biggest problem we have, the thing we need the most help with, and thing we cannot overcome on our own is our sin, our rebellion against God and our selfishness. And, the result of sin is death for all people, and for those who do not find forgiveness in Jesus, eternal punishment. In hell. This is a real problem.

3. This strikes me personally. Not only am I plagued by such sin, and all of us. But my new born grand daughter is born a sinner into a world of sin. This greatest of problems is unfortunately hers too. Sin and it's consequences are a curse to our little Emmalee, as they are to all of us.

II. When we get older we know that we shouldn't eat certain foods, like potato chips, but we still do sometimes. Only, when we know better, then we also know and feel guilt.

A. Jesus caused Herod to realize his guilt, and it should have caused him to find the problem to that guilt right under his nose..

1. We are told. **14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." 16 But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"** 2. Guilt is meant to turn us to Jesus. Instead, of turning to Jesus, Herod gave in to his sin.

3. The solution to Herod's problem was right in front of him, but he missed it.

B. How will we deal with this greatest of troubles, with our sin that is more than a trouble, but a curse? Herod ignored his guilt, and his troubles, and the results got worse.

III. If I have spent too much and the bill arrives, I don't always like to admit what it says. But the bill is real whether I want to admit it or not, and not facing it cannot make it go away.

I may not want to admit my sin, and my helplessness to deal with it. But, the truth of my sin found in this verse is realistic, and makes this verse most applicable to the reality of our situation.

A. The problem of our sin is real, and the solution to that problem is right here. It is Jesus.

1. Sin is not a made up problem. Jesus faced the reality of sin.
 2. Jesus faced down our sin, the real sin we face, the strong sin that is stronger than we are, and he overcame it with His righteous life.
 3. Jesus paid for our sin with his death on the cross.
 4. Jesus showed himself victorious over our sin and its consequences when He rose again.
- B. Sin is a real problem, and Jesus is not some wishful hope of weak people. Sin is the real problem, the worst problem that people have, and Jesus is the strong, the real solution God has for us.
1. When because of our guilt we turn to Jesus in sorrow for our sin, and when we turn to Jesus trusting in His victory, God not only saves us for eternal life, he strengthens us to live for Him today.
 2. For the worst problem we have, Jesus is the real hope, the only hope. He is our forgiveness, our salvation, our strength, our help for life's journey in a sinful world.
- C. So, today, as my grand daughter is brought forward, and faces the worst problems of this life, we can live, not in wishful thinking, but in the sure hope of Jesus' victory.
1. Jesus gives that victory today in her baptism.
 2. Jesus gives His Spirit so she can trust in Him, and continue in that trust, living not for herself, but in the amazing love and grace of God for her in Jesus.

CONCLUSION - A report recently came out from the government about job safety and fishing was shown to be the most dangerous job. In fact, Alaska fishing was mentioned. There are stories of crew members who have been lost with a sinking boat but have been found floating in the ocean, in safety suits, or clinging to a piece of wreckage. The storm, the sea, was stronger than the crew members, it raged around them, but they were saved by the suits, by the wreckage, until they were finally saved by the Coast Guard.

In the storm of life, when the world rages around us, Jesus is not only that which we cling to, He saves us for eternal life. This is real!