

Homily For Tuesday of the 13th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - June 28, 2022

Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12 "The Lord has spoken. Therefore, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

Psalm 5:4-7 "You are not a God who delights in wickedness."

Matt. 8:23-27 "He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a dead calm."

Why Are You Afraid?

Introduction

The English language absorbs new words as easily as the best paper towel. New words receive definitions and are incorporated into the dictionary. They come from movies or from cultural influences or from clever advertising. Captain Obvious is one of those words (phrases). Perhaps you have heard it or used it. When someone says something that is so obvious it doesn't really need to be said, someone today might say, "Thanks, Captain Obvious." It's from advertising about an online hotel booking website.

In today's passages, the prophet Amos, and the Lord Jesus himself, both ask questions that are meant to draw out obvious answers from their hearers.

Amos

Amos asks seven questions. The answers to some of them might not be obvious to us. I don't know that much about lions, so I can't tell you for sure whether a lion roars in the forest when it has no prey. Maybe it roars because its prey got away. On the other hand, it is clear from the writing that Amos is being Captain Obvious to those of his day. They know the behaviour of lions and birds. They know that a bird won't be caught unless there is a trap to catch it and that a trap doesn't spring closed unless something lands in it. They know that the blowing of a trumpet often causes fear because it means some bad news has arrived.

So, after all these obvious questions, Amos gets to the point that should be obvious to the people: God is God. God has acted in history, both to save when the people are in distress, but also to discipline when the people stop trusting. He

reminds them of the obvious truth that Lord speaks. And when he does, you had better listen. It is as obvious as the fact that natural signs point to the supernatural reality of God. And, the supernatural is made obvious in those natural signs. All creation gives praise and glory to God and the truth about God.

Amos concludes with these words from God. First, I snatched you up from a consuming fire time and time again. Second, You did not return to me. And, as obvious are those two things, follows just as obviously the warning: "Prepare to meet your God." If you know the first two things, you should also know that meeting will not be pleasant.

Amos was as clear as it gets. And yet the people, if they could see the obvious, refused to turn back to trust in the Lord. Thirty years later, the northern kingdom of Israel was utterly destroyed. Looking back at prophecy, the relationship is pretty obvious.

Matthew

I think we all know that Jesus is sometimes really clear and sometimes more difficult to understand. Today he asks the most clear question of all. The disciples in the boat with him have surrendered to their fears at the sudden natural occurrence of a storm. Many of them are fishermen, used to being on the sea, so why are they afraid. Perhaps it is because the storm is sudden and violent. But the question Jesus asks is meant to make it obvious to us that it is not about the storm. It is about their lack of trust in the Saviour. It's the same lack of trust of the ancient Israelites. They have seen the signs Jesus performed. They have come to believe that he is the Messiah. Yet Jesus still has to ask the obvious question: Why are you afraid, you of little faith?

Today, Jesus asks the same question. Why are you afraid? This should not surprise people of faith. When we look at the world. When we start to think like the world, we should not be surprised that we continue to be afraid of the storms around us. We believe that we are going to because our earthly environment is in danger of destruction and that the human race will not survive. We continue to be anxious and afraid that we will perish in storm caused by a virus. We continue to be afraid

that war will consume the whole world. There are many other fears like this. It can be easy to forget the obvious, that Jesus is in the boat with us. If he is not, then we are lost to all of those fears. But, if we know the truth that he is in the boat and in the storm with us, we cannot be afraid. What sort of man is this, they asked? He is God. Death does not have dominion over him. Death cannot hold him. That is the meaning of the resurrection. If we are truly one with him in faith, that same truth belongs to us. There is no terror on this earth that can make us afraid.

St. Irenaeus

From the beginning, the Church was referred to as the boat of Peter. Most of the time in church history it looks like that boat is sinking. If the Church was only a human institution, we would be right to be afraid. But we know that Christ is the head of the church.

St. Irenaeus is a fantastic reminder of this reality. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John the Apostle. Can you imagine how close Jesus seemed at that time? And yet, there were already threats to the Church. St. Irenaeus himself was martyred in the persecution storm that raged for the first three centuries.

One of the great comforts we can draw from this saint is how consistent has been our teaching from the beginning about the closeness of Jesus. Consider his statement about the Eucharist: "Just as bread from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, made up of two elements, one earthly and one heavenly, so also our bodies, in receiving the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, for they have the hope of resurrection." What an amazing reminder that Jesus, who was in the boat in a storm on the Sea of Galilee, is still with us in the Eucharist.

Conclusion/Call to Action

I still am tempted to keep asking in my prayer: Save me Lord, for I am perishing. Whenever we may be afraid that the storm will overcome us, let us not forget that our Savior is God himself, made man, and that He is always close to us. Let us have an answer to his question: Why are you afraid? I conclude with the words of a later saint, Julian of Norwich. She answered that question like this: "In Christ, all will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of thing will be well."

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *He walked with me in integrity and peace and turned many away from evil.*

Collect: *O God, who called the Bishop Saint Irenaeus to confirm true doctrine. Grant through his intercession that we may always be intent on fostering unity and concord.*

Amos: *Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you. I will punish you for all your iniquities. Does a lion roar in the forest when it has no prey? Does disaster befall a city unless the Lord has done it? The lion has roared. Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken. Therefore prepare to meet your God, O Israel!*

Psalms: *You are not a God who delights in wickedness. The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful. But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in awe of you.*

Matthew: *Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. A windstorm arose so great that the boat was being swamped, but he was asleep. They woke him up, saying: "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" And Jesus said to them: "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a dead calm. The disciples were amazed, saying: "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"*