

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

### St Peter's 8:30am Mass - July 5, 2024

**Amos 8:4-12** "I will turn your feasts into mourning and your songs into lamentation, as for an only son."

**Psalms 119:2,10,20,30,40,131** "With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments."

**Matthew 9:9-13** "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

### Follow Me

#### Introduction

Happy Stampede! That's the frequently heard greeting for the next ten days. That and 'Yahoo'. That sounds like an Aramaic greeting that Jesus might have used. Of course, it's not, but we do celebrate Stampede in many of the local churches. Right here at St. Peter's we will have a Stampede breakfast after mass tomorrow.

#### Amos

In the midst of the revelry, we hear Amos the prophet. He warns about a coming chastisement for two great sins: The sin of injustice, which is treating the poor terribly, and ignoring God's word, the sin of idolatry - that because there will always be worship of something if not God. God will punish the people by a famine of hearing the word. This is frightening. If you ignore my prophets, I will withdraw them, God tells them. We have had our modern prophets, like St. Teresa and St. Pope John Paul II. Are we listening to them? Are we aligning ourselves with God's word. Without it, there is darkness. Feasts will be turned into mourning. We will lament as over the loss of a Son. The sun will go down at noon. We will be stuck between death and resurrection. It will be like Holy Saturday with no hope or knowledge of the Sunday to come.

The children know about the religious meaning of Christmas, even though they are obsessed by Santa Claus. But they don't know about Easter beyond bunnies and chocolate.

Amos promises that there will be a day of judgment. It will be a famine, not of food but of hearing the word of the Lord. When the people of God reject, then

ignore, his word, he withdraws it so it will not be profaned, made ordinary and trampled upon. He withdraws his presence. In one psalm it says: They would not listen to my voice, so I abandoned them to follow their own designs. The punishment is to allow people to fall deeply into sin which, in the case of Israel, leads to the catastrophic loss of freedom.

## **Psalm**

The people had psalm 119 to pray but they were not following what it calls for. This is a most remarkable psalm. We tend to gravitate to those psalms which express God's mercy and love and protection, and rightly so. How can we not be moved by psalm 23 and the declaration that God walks with us in our darkest moments and places. But this psalm today is a powerful antidote to the sickness that comes with a loss of faith. I think if I prayed this psalm every day, I would come to love God more. It expresses repeatedly the love of God's commandments.

The psalm repeats five different words for God's law. Today's passage has four of them. Happy are those who keep the decrees of the Lord, who seek him with their whole heart. My soul is consumed with longing for your ordinances. I have chosen the way of faithfulness. I have longed for you precepts. With open mouth I pant, because I long for you commandments. When nations make laws, even when they are trying to make good laws, if they do so without longing for God's precepts, ultimately justice and happiness will be more and more difficult to achieve.

## **Matthew**

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus sends Pharisees and others to a bible study. Go and listen to the Word of God, he says. If you had learned what this means, you would be merciful. But they plot Jesus death instead, the death of the Word of God. Literally, that word was taken away.

But there is hope because Matthew is called in the midst of a life of obsession with money and influence. The world around him is lamentation, yet he responds

to a faint call: You there, follow me. Follow the word. Follow God. Follow his law. A single word by the Master, and Matthew leaves his profession happily. He has heard the Word speak a prophetic word of hope. It is a command, but a command to follow the Son of Justice.

As we often hear, in Jesus' day, tax collectors were associated with sinners. They were traitors to their people for collecting taxes for the Romans, often collecting more than was required. Jesus calling Matthew was a huge surprise. But Christ came for those who were not upright, not for those who think they are. As St. Paul later said, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

More often than not, to follow Jesus means to leave behind some messy passion, to allot more moments of prayer, to give more to a work of justice. Jesus is, indeed, asking me to change my life, to follow him more closely than before.

### **Call to Conversion**

Jesus is THE Word of God. Will he be withdrawn if we continue our self centered path? That is hard to imagine. How about today when we are without a priest, who is Christ in the celebration of the mass?

Amos is still calling out for justice and a return to the Lord. The psalmist is still proclaiming a love, a longing, a panting for the decrees, the precepts, the commandments of the Lord. Jesus is still inviting you and me to dine with him.

On this day of secular feasting, may we join Matthew in following Jesus without hesitation, who is full of mercy, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *As for me, in justice I shall behold your face. I shall be filled with the vision of your glory.*

**Collect:** *O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who account themselves Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ, and to strive after all that does it honour.*

**Amos:** *Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, "When will the Sabbath be over so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. On that day, says the Lord God, I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation. Like the mourning for an only son, and a bitter day. The time is surely coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.*

**Psalms:** *No one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Happy are those who keep the decrees of the Lord, who seek him with their whole heart. My soul is consumed with longing for your ordinances. I have chosen the way of faithfulness. I have longed for your precepts. With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments.*

**Matthew:** *Jesus saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And Matthew got up and followed him. As Jesus sat at dinner many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. The Pharisees said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick do. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."*