

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."

Psalms 5:4-7 "I will bow down toward your holy temple in fear of you."

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

Why Are You Afraid?

Introduction

As usual, the one thing that did not come up in public celebrations of Canada Day is that St. Joseph is the patron saint of our country, which has been true since 1625. As always, he is the saint who constantly reminds people of faith to be humble, to be chaste in mind and body, and to be silently obedient to God.

In Sacred Scripture, the prophets are not silent. In fact, God asks them to roar like a lion to get people's attention. It frightens people, but that is the point. Despite our perceived sophistication and our technology, we need to be woken up from our complacency. The roar of the lion is, literally, to scare the hell out of us, so that we don't go down the road of damnation. Jesus himself is the fulfilment of all prophecy. That's why he is called "the lion of the tribe of Judah." When he roars, we had better listen.

Just 120 years ago, the 1900 Paris Exposition was a world's fair held in Paris, France, to celebrate the achievements of the past century and to accelerate development into the next. Fifty million people went to see displays of many technological innovations, including the moving sidewalk, diesel engines, talking films, escalators and the first magnetic audio recorder.

Humanity was demonstrating mastery over nature. Three events shocked the world out of that dream. First was the sinking of the Titanic, man's greatest sign of technological conquest, by a simple bit of nature, a chunk of ice floating in the ocean. Then, the horrors of the First World War shattered the dream of peace. That ended with the devastation of the Spanish Flu, which killed 50 million people, the exact same number who went to that fair. These events were

devastating for the psyche of western culture. We couldn't save ourselves from these catastrophic events?

Amos

During a time of great prosperity and peace in Israel, God's prophet Amos roared out about a coming storm. He was the blowing of a trumpet, not like in the Stampede parade, but the warning of fearful news arriving. Amos prophesied at the cult temple of Bethel, denouncing the hollow prosperity of his time, and predicting the overthrow of Israel. He was disturbing their peace. Amos roared the message. And yet the people, even if they could see what was coming, refused to turn back to trust in the Lord. Not thirty years later, the storm happened. The northern kingdom of Israel was utterly destroyed. They did not listen.

Amos notes that God has acted in history, both to save when the people are in distress, but also to discipline when the people stop trusting. "I snatched you up from a consuming fire time and time again but you did not return to me. Prepare to meet your God." Amos uses some natural images, which he intends to point to supernatural realities. If you get what he is saying, you should also know that meeting will not be pleasant.

Matthew

The disciples on the Sea of Galilee were enjoying the peace when a sudden and terrifying storm arose. We can imagine how frightened they must have been in the boat when "suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by waves." "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" they cried. They had the good sense to be afraid of that natural phenomenon. However, they did not see the supernatural meaning. They knew Jesus as the Lord, yet were afraid. The storm was still raging and the disciples full of fear and confusion, when Jesus "rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm." Jesus' Word brought the calm over the waters. But Jesus' Word was addressed to appease his disciples' fearful hearts. "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" They have seen the signs Jesus performed. They have come to believe that he is the

Messiah. Yet Jesus still has to ask the question: Why are you afraid, you of little faith?

When Jesus rebukes the wind and waves, the word used is the same one he uses to rebuke evil spirits during exorcisms. Our fear of the natural storms in our lives should wake us up to the dangers of succumbing to fears stirred up in our souls by demonic forces. The great calm that immediately comes over the sea demonstrates Jesus total authority over the powers that stirred the wind and waters. Much more than this, Jesus demonstrates the power over the deeper anxieties of our souls. It is only natural common sense to be afraid of what can harm us. But it is supernatural common sense that invites us to turn to the Lord who is ready to calm the storms in our hearts and minds and souls.

Today, the lion of the tribe of Judah asks the same question. Why are you afraid? This should not surprise people of faith. We should not be surprised that we continue to be afraid of the storms around us, which disturb our peace. It can be easy to forget that Jesus is in the boat with us. If he is not, then we are lost to all of those fears. What sort of man is this, they asked? He is God. 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.

Call to Conversion

St. Augustine says that faith is to believe what you do not see, and that the reward of this faith is to see what you have come to believe. Let us not pretend that the storm is not raging. Let us turn toward Jesus and be amazed at the only one who has power over demonic forces and the forces of nature. The apostles are not wrong to be afraid. We should be like them, acknowledge our fear and call out: "We are perishing. Lord, save us." Yes, the Lord will chastise us for our lack of faith. But to know we need a saviour from the storm will be our salvation. We cannot save ourselves. But he is not asleep. He will save us. He will do it.

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?"*