**Notes for Next Sunday**

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

**The Point of this Week’s Readings**

When representatives of God speak the truth of the Law to people who are comfortable in their sin, the message is received with antagonism. That is the message in the Old Testament and Gospel. It reinforces the message in Proverbs 23:9 which states, “Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words.” (ESV)

Psalm (Psalm 85). This psalm is a communal prayer for the renewal of God’s mercies to His people at a time when they were once more suffering distress. It may have been written soon after the return of the exiles from Babylon (vv 1–3). The psalm has two main divisions of seven (Hebrew) lines each: (1) the prayer (vv. 1–7); (2) a reassuring word (vv. 8–13).

Old Testament (Amos 7:7-15). In order to see that Gospel in God’s call to Amos, it is important to remember God’s reason in sending him to speak: even at this late date, God still desires that his people repent and that he may heal them with forgiveness. Toward this end, God’s heart is revealed in the verses immediately prior to our reading. Twice in 7:1–6, God declares impending punishment, and twice he relents. Only when Israel refuses to acknowledge Him does God’s judgment become final.

Epistle (Ephesians 1:3-14). This is all one sentence in Greek. This section is often called a “doxology” because it recites what God has done and is an expression of worship to honor him. Paul speaks first of the blessings we have through the Father (v. 3), then of those that come through the Son (vv. 4–13a) and finally of those through the Holy Spirit (1:13b–14). (CSB)

Gospel (Mark 6:14-29). News of Jesus’ ministry had spread far and wide. Even King Herod had heard about it. Herod’s conscience was kicking in and he believes that Jesus is John the Baptist brought back to life. Herod was remembering that he had had John beheaded because he got drunk and made a foolish promise to daughter of his wife. The real problem was that Herod had adulterously taken his brother’s wife and John had called them on it. She held a grudge and waited for a time like this to get even with John the Baptist. Truth is not always well received.

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

**Psalm 85**

1﻿ **You showed favor to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. ﻿2﻿ You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. *Selah* ﻿3﻿ You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger. ﻿4﻿ Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. ﻿5﻿ Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? ﻿6﻿ Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? ﻿7﻿ Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. ﻿8﻿ I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints— but let them not return to folly. ﻿9﻿ Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. ﻿10﻿ Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. ﻿11﻿ Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. ﻿12﻿ The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. ﻿13﻿ Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*85:1–3* Israel begins her prayer by appealing to the Lord’s past mercies, recalling how he has forgiven and restored them before (perhaps a reference to the restoration from exile). (CSB)

*85:4–7* Since God does not operate on whims, but according to the unchangeable principle of grace expressed in the gospel, the psalmist is confident that Israel will again experience the same mercy they had experienced so often in the past. (PBC)

*85:8–13* This section is noteworthy for its picturesque language. The blessings the Lord provides are portrayed as the people who meet with a kiss and as crops which spring up and flourish. Although this promise was fulfilled in a limited way when God restored Israel from captivity, this section is best understood as a description of the blessings of the Messianic era. (PBC)

**Old Testament – Amos 7:7-15**

**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.”**

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*7:7* Israel is compared to a wall built true to plumb—what she should have been, after all that Lord had done for her. (CSB)

*7:7 plumb line*. It was the builder’s tool used to determine a straight, vertical line. In this comparison, the wall represents Israel. Though the Lord originally set up Israel to be right and true, the nation has become crooked and warped. Israel needs to be re-measured by the Lord’s plumb line, since only then can things be set right. (TLSB)

*7:9* *high places … sanctuaries … house.* This is about the centers of religious (idol worship) and political pretension and of self-righteous pride that would be wiped out. (CSB)

*7:9 Jeroboam.* Prophecy reveals that the breakaway dynastic line of the Northern Kingdom would be ended by invading enemies. Historically, this was fulfilled when Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, was assassinated. (TLSB)

**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.’**

*7:10 Amaziah.* Amaziah and Amos should have been partners because they both were to represent the Lord.

*7:10 conspired*. Amaziah charges Amos with inciting insurrection and so overthrowing the dynasty ruling Israel. Apparently, Amos’s message was getting through, for Amaziah protests that the land “is not able to bear all his words.” (TLSB)

*7:12 seer.* A seer was sometimes called a star gazer and not someone to be taken seriously. Seers were often hired to tell what kings and others wanted to hear. This Amaziah’s way to put down Amos and his message.

*7:13* *never again prophesy at Bethel*. Amaziah stops short of forbidding Amos from prophesying altogether. Instead, he forbids Amos from preaching in territories ruled by Jeroboam; he cannot deny that Amos is a true prophet. (TLSB)

*7:14* *neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son.* Amos readily admits he was not originally a prophet, nor did he come from a family or school of prophets. Rather, he engaged in an agricultural vocation, both as a herdsman and as one who scraped the fruit of fig trees in order to hasten their ripening (still practiced today). (TLSB) Amos wasn’t even from the Northern Kingdom but had lived in Judah, the Southern Kingdom when God called him

**Epistle – Ephesians 1:3-14**

**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 hepredestined 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.**

In this one Greek sentence Paul heaps up a great mound of spiritual blessings that he wants the Ephesians to know about. The major theme is one of “being chosen” by God. It is stated with different terms as predestined, chosen, and adopted. *The primary point of the doctrine of predestination is that as God’s chosen we can rest assured that our salvation will not be taken away from us.*

Predestination is whatever God has done, is doing and still will do for us during our life on earth to bring us to faith in Christ and to preserve us in this faith unto eternal salvation.

Some things to remember:

1. It is a mystery that we will never understand this side of heaven.
2. It is not a matter of chance.
3. It is not motivated by any personal merit and worthiness or better conduct on the part of humans.
4. People are not predestined to hell. That would be contrary to God’s will.
5. No one should think that, because he is in faith today and thereby assured of his election, he may now discard the Gospel, lose faith, live in sin, and still regard himself as one of the elect who will unfailingly be saved. People can through willful and intentional neglect throw away their faith. There is no such thing as “once saved, always saved”
6. The life of the Christian is not in the hands of “fate.” In this short phrase three things are said:
   1. Our destiny is in God’s hands,
   2. The spirit in which God handles us is loving, and
   3. Christ is the agent through whom our destiny is managed.

The following are some insights to individual verses…

*1:8* *lavished.* It means to excel beyond any imagination, to be superabundant in giving. In a million years we would not have devised such a plan. Rather, God devised it. (TLSB)

*1:9**mystery.* An astonishing revelation – the Gospel is for the Gentiles as well as the Jew (3:6).“Mystery religions” in the ancient world promised to reveal mysterious truths as adherents progressed to higher levels. For Paul, the emphasis is not on things kept hidden, but that things once hidden in God’s plan are now revealed to all. (TLSB)

1:10 *to bring … under one head.* It literally mean to, “put under one head,” i.e., Christ. Because Jesus is both God and man, humankind and God are reconciled in Him. Because all who are baptized are “in Christ,” they are also reconciled to one another, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. (TLSB)

*1:13marked … with a seal.* In those days a seal denoted ownership. – Such faith is sealed and resealed through Word and Sacraments. A stamp on our hand can wear off and so can the seal if we neglect his Word and Sacrament. (CSB)

*1:14* *deposit.* The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the earnest money, of our heavenly inheritance. The Holy Spirit brought us to faith and, as Martin Luther put it in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, The Holy Spirit “keeps us in the one true faith.” In other words, we are secure. Our place in heaven is guaranteed. A deposit has been made. Our reservation is confirmed in the ongoing presence and power of the Spirit in our lives. (LL)

**Gospel – Mark 6:14-29**

**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 following are some insights to individual verses…

*6:14* *King Herod.* Mark may here have used the title “king” sarcastically (since Herod was actually a tetrarch), or perhaps he simply used Herod’s popular title. (CSB)

*6:17 Herodias.* She was a granddaughter of Herod the Great. First she married her uncle, Herod Philip (Herod the Great also had another son named Philip), who lived in Rome. While a guest in their home, Herod Antipas persuaded Herodias to leave her husband for him. Marriage to one’s brother’s wife, while the brother was still living, was forbidden by the Mosaic law (Lev 18:16). (CSB)

*6:22* *the daughter of Herodias.* This narrative seems to imply that Herodias was biding her time, but that she deliberately sent her daughter into the feast to dance, in order to induce Herod to grant her desire. (Lane)

*6:23* *up to half my kingdom.* Herod did not have authority to dispense with half of his kingdom, but used the phrase as an extravagant expression. (TLSB)

*6:26* greatly distressed. This is not repentance on the part of the king, but a confession of guilt. (TLSB) This verse shows Herod Antipas at his worst, namely, weak, corrupt, and shallow. He is worried about his honor more than anything else. Indeed, if he broke his oath, never again would he be trusted. (CC)

*6:28 head on a platter.* This was a grisly display of John’s severed head – at a meal no less – illustrates the extreme corruption of Herod and his high society friends. (TLSB)