

PENTECOST 6

Proper 11 - Year C

This Bible study was written by Sarah Ginolfi for Proper 11 (C) in 2013.

Amos 8:1-12

⁸ This is what the Lord God showed me: a basket of summer fruit. ² He said, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the Lord said to me,

“The end has come upon my people Israel;
I will spare them no longer.

³ The songs of the temple shall become wailings on that day,”

says the Lord God;

“the dead bodies shall be many,
cast out in every place. Be silent!”

⁴ Hear this, you who trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,

⁵ saying, “When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain,

and the Sabbath,

so that we may offer wheat for sale?

We will make the ephah smaller and the shekel heavier

and practice deceit with false balances,

⁶ buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals
and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”

⁷ The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

⁸ Shall not the land tremble on this account,
and everyone mourn who lives in it,
and all of it rise like the Nile,

and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?

⁹ On that day, says the Lord God,

I will make the sun go down at noon
and darken the earth in broad daylight.

¹⁰ I will turn your feasts into mourning
and all your songs into lamentation;

I will bring sackcloth on all loins
and baldness on every head;

I will make it like the mourning for an only son
and the end of it like a bitter day.

¹¹ The time is surely coming, says the Lord God,
when I will send a famine on the land,
not a famine of bread or a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the Lord.

¹² They shall wander from sea to sea
and from north to east;
they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord,
but they shall not find it.

Commentary from Sarah Ginolfi

Our immediate surroundings are not always the best indicators of the great world around us. Sometimes we, like Amos, can see only that the basket of fruit sitting before us is, well, a basket of fruit. That basket of fruit, however, might be one person's livelihood. Or it could be the means to ward off another person's constant hunger. God's work in the world transcends the boundaries of time and space, but we humans must endure the boundaries of time and space – if only for a little while. Amos' message of social justice demonstrates that how we treat people ultimately reflects how we treat God. May we constantly ask ourselves: What lies beyond that basket of fruit?

Discussion Questions

How do you see beyond what is right in front of you?

Psalm 52

- ¹ You tyrant, why do you boast of wickedness *
against the godly all day long?
- ² You plot ruin; your tongue is like a sharpened
razor, *
O worker of deception.
- ³ You love evil more than good *
and lying more than speaking the truth.
- ⁴ You love all words that hurt, *
O you deceitful tongue.
- ⁵ Oh, that God would demolish you utterly, *
topple you, and snatch you from your
dwelling, and root you out of the land of the
living!
- ⁶ The righteous shall see and tremble, *
and they shall laugh at him, saying,
- ⁷ "This is the one who did not take God for a refuge,*
but trusted in great wealth and relied upon
wickedness."
- ⁸ But I am like a green olive tree in the house of
God; *
I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
- ⁹ I will give you thanks for what you have done *
and declare the goodness of your Name in the
presence of the godly.

Commentary from Sarah Ginolfi

This psalm attributed to David condemns an unidentified leader. The speaker attacks the enemy's language in a way that criticizes the enemy's entire way of living in the world. The speaker claims further that God will easily uproot and destroy the one who speaks with such wickedness. On the other hand, the psalmist, like the olive tree, remains firmly planted in the ground. This passage reveals a God many of us don't like to think about. It also reveals some of the harmful ways that we interact with one another. No matter how we spin this psalm, it illustrates a grueling portrait of the struggle of walking with God and each other. It also reveals the struggle of walking against God in the company of those who are attempting to walk with God. Ultimately, every word and phrase matters.

Discussion Questions

How do words shape what we believe?

How do words identify who we are?

Colossians 1:15-28

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, ²³ provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a minister of this gospel.

²⁴ I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵ I became its minister according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Commentary from Sarah Ginolfi

Oftentimes, the home in Christ feels contrary to the fast-paced culture in our surroundings. And so we gather together as Christians to celebrate the God we love and to learn more about this home we occupy. At times, the family lodging in Christ can start to feel a little too cramped, a bit too familiar. On some days, we may even wish to leave this dwelling in search of something more comfortable. Paul encourages us, however, to focus on the vastness of the life in Christ and to cherish the great diversity that God represents. Further, the life in Christ compels us to share this lovely dwelling place with those who might not even know that such a place exists. Can you imagine what it would be like to hear of such a place for the first time? How glorious it is to welcome new members to such an infinite home!

Discussion Questions

How do you dwell in Christ? God? Each other?

What are some ways that you share your life in Christ with others?

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Commentary from Sarah Ginolfi

What a joy it is to take a break in the company of friends who love us when traveling! Luke's gospel account teems with short vignettes of Jesus' encounters with his neighbors: he heals children and a centurion slave, and feeds a multitude with few ingredients. The account of Mary and Martha portrayed here comes just after the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus attempts to illustrate what a neighbor is. In the account of Mary and Martha, it is all too easy for us to get caught up in judgment labels: Mary, Good Neighbor; Martha, Bad Neighbor. The deeper meaning to this story, however, is the need for us to build spaces in our life where relationships are the No. 1 priority. Our houses may not always look the way we want them to, but even a house worthy of being featured in the latest Better Homes and Gardens does not always create a space where relationships can grow. That space begins within our hearts.

Discussion Questions

What determines a neighbor?

What is your neighbor ministry?