

15th Sunday of the Year B

First Reading Amos 7:12-15

To Amos, Amaziah said, "Go away, seer; get back to the land of Judah; earn your bread there, do your prophesying there. We want no more prophesying in Bethel; this is the royal sanctuary, the national temple." "I was no prophet, neither did I belong to any of the brotherhoods of prophets," Amos replied to Amaziah, "I was a shepherd, and looked after sycamores: but it was the Lord who took me from herding the flock, and the Lord who said, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

Second Reading Ephesians 1:3-10

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ for his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved in whom, through his blood, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins. Such is the richness of the grace which he has showered on us in all wisdom and insight. He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, the hidden plan he so kindly made in Christ from the beginning to act upon when the times had run their course to the end: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth.

Gospel Mark 6:7-13

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs giving them authority over the unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, "Do not take a spare tunic." And he said to them, "If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them." So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

Meditation

Through the sending out of his disciples, Jesus, who remains behind, sees his message spread.

They who share in his company and his destiny are committed to the prophetic proclamation of the kingdom. As he spoke in former times through the prophets, God still speaks through human words. Certainly, these Galilean fishermen had no more preparation than Amos, the simple herdsman, for such a mission. But what matters is not the brilliance of their intellect, the seductive power of their words, the nobility of their origins. Ridding themselves of useless baggage and resources, they must let Christ speak through their mouths, act through their hands.

Of course, because the kingdom of God does not meet superficial human expectations, the success of the mission is not guaranteed. The "crowds" welcome may be lukewarm or ephemeral, if not hostile. That should not stop them. Seized by God, chosen by his Son, the disciples must go ahead and proclaim the imminence of the kingdom. Thus, far from being the time when the prophetic word has ceased to make itself heard, the time of the Church is the eleventh hour when, with the greatest urgency, the gospel must be preached and spread. Faithful to the Spirit, we, by our stammered words and hesitant actions, must awaken our times to the mystery of Jesus and of his kingdom.