

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B July 12, 2015

How do we use power? How do we speak truth to power? What do we do when we are both “power” and “prophet”? These are some of the questions raised by the Lectionary this week. The challenge we face is to exercise the power we have with justice and in submission to the higher authority of God’s Reign, while holding the powers of our world accountable to God’s justice, compassion, equality and good management.

May we be confronted by God’s truth and power as we worship and may we be transformed into prophets who use power well and who courageously and faithfully speak truth to power when required.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

2 Samuel 6 : 1-5, 12b-19

We have heard how David became king, and now read how he established Jerusalem not only as his capital city but the centre for worship. The Ark of God symbolised God’s presence, and David had it brought to Jerusalem from Judah and set in place with great ceremony.

or **Amos 7 : 7-15**

When a prophet feels compelled to speak out against kings and priests, he cannot expect a sympathetic hearing. We shall hear how John the Baptist suffered under Herod; in this reading Amos is banished from Israel for his message of doom.

Psalms 24

A song affirming that the earth is the Lord’s, along with all its inhabitants, because God is the one who created it, but only people of purity and integrity are able to enter into God’s sanctuary. Then, God is welcomed with open gates.

Or Psalm 85:8-13

God speaks peace to his faithful people and God’s salvation is close to those who honour God; God gives good things to those who walk in righteousness.

Ephesians 1 : 3-14

The main theme of this letter, from which we shall hear key passages these next Sundays, is the concept of the church as Christ’s body on earth. The idea is familiar to us, but was new then. The letter begins with great praise for what God has done in Christ.

Mark 6 : 14-29

Mark interrupts his story of Jesus to tell us how John the Baptist came to be executed, because his forthright criticism of Herod and Herodias was intolerable.

Click here to view the readings -

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=2%20Samuel%206:%201-5,%2012b-19%0A%20BOR%0A%20Amos%207:%207-15%20%0A%20Acw%20Psalm%2024%0A%20BOR%0A%20Acw%20Psalm%2085:%208-13%0A%20Ephesians%201:%203-14%0A%20Mark%206:%2014-29

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O God,
who hast prepared for them that love thee
such good things as pass man's understanding;
Pour into our hearts such love toward thee,
that we, loving thee above all things,
may obtain thy promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
Pour into our hearts such love toward you
that we, loving you above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Heavenly Father, you call ordinary people, like Amos, to witness. Help us to discern the message of those called by the church to speak, and to be open to hear your direct, personal call to serve.

Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Holy Spirit, help us sense the Psalmist's joy in our lives. Let joy and faithfulness meet together. Let righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Lord Jesus Christ, we know that our highest calling is to be children of God. Help us live as your adopted sons and daughters, as inheritors of your grace.

Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Holy Spirit, although King Herod liked to hear John the Baptist preach, he was neither convinced nor converted by John's message. Guard us from careless listening to the Word of Life.

Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Lord God, the desperate poor in this world, the deserted, the homeless and the hopeless are ever present. As we seek to meet basic needs for all, help us recognize that the face of our brother or sister in need is your holy face.

Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Lord Jesus Christ, the poor in health need our prayers and our presence. Hear us name those we know who need your intervention _____.

Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

The love of God has won. The new life has begun. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Presider or deacon

Let us dance before the Lord with all our might and offer prayers for all peoples in every place.

Deacon or other leader

For *N* our bishop and *N* our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

Lord, have mercy.

For mercy, justice, and peace in the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For farmers and a good harvest, for those on vacation, and for safety from violent storms.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who thirst and hunger: the sick and the dying, the poor and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, and for their families.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For ourselves, our families and companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with *the parish saint* and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hear the prayers we offer this day and grant us our inheritance as your own people; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

POST COMMUNION

God of our pilgrimage,
you have led us to the living water.
Refresh and sustain us
as we go forward on our journey,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O God,
sustain us in the complexity of our humanity
as you sustained David--
playing the harp of youth,
throwing stones at giant problems,
loving our friends beyond wisdom,
dancing worship,
mourning children,
breaking our hearts in psalms, and
longing for warmth in our old bones. Amen.

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.

Intercessions may be included, concluding with:

Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.
As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.

Intercessions may be included, concluding with:

Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.

Intercessions may be included, concluding with:

Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Amen.

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Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.

Intercessions may be included, concluding with:

Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.

Intercessions may be included, concluding with:

Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.

Intercessions may be included, concluding with:

Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,

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receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.

Intercessions may be included, concluding with:

Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Scripture

God of hosts, before whom David danced and sang,
Mother of mercy and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
in whom all things cohere;
whenever we are confronted by
lust, hate, or fear,
give us the faith of John the baptizer
that we may trust in the redemption of your Messiah. Amen.

Steadfast God,
your prophets set the plumb line
of your righteousness and truth
in the midst of your people.
Grant us the courage to judge ourselves against it.
Straighten all that is crooked or warped within us
until our hearts and souls stretch upright,
blameless and holy,
to meet the glory of Christ. Amen.

Offertory

Almighty and Sovereign God, through your word, you remind us that we are your children, chosen by you through adoption, claimed by you as fully worthy of the inheritance that you have planned for us. In this act, we have been adopted into great wealth, not the wealth that the world prizes, but a treasure that is valued by your heavenly measure. As we offer these gifts to you, we pray that they might be more than support for a budget of the church -- a symbol of our understanding that the wealth worth pursuing is found in a relationship with your Son. With the confidence of your children claimed by you, we pray in his Holy name. Amen. (*Ephesians 1:3-14*)

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19:

- This is a strange passage, and in it, Michal, one of David's wives, and daughter of deceased King Saul, comes out looking whiny and moody. But make sure you know her whole story. She was in love with David, and he married her, but eventually when he and Saul came into conflict, Saul gave Michael to another man to be married. When David wanted Michal back, he had to tear her away from her new husband, who followed after them crying. It is not surprising that she isn't thrilled to see David prancing around in his ephod (decorative ritual underwear!) Chapter six

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unfortunately ends with noting that Michal remains barren, not able to continue her family bloodline. I think she gets a bad deal.

- That aside, the heart of the text today is in David's full body, soul, and heart dance before the Lord. He literally puts his whole self into giving thanks to God, dancing "with all his might." We are rarely so free and uninhibited when it comes to putting ourselves before God. What's holding you back?

Psalm 24:

- What belongs to God in this psalm isn't limited to humankind - we too often act like that's all that's meant by God's creation!
"clean hands and pure hearts" - A mix of motherly and godly advice?
- This psalm ties directly to the Advent hymn, "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates." The psalmist prepares for a triumphant arrival of the deity.

Ephesians 1:3-14:

- "adoption as his children through Jesus Christ" - The language of adoption in terms of our relationship to God stirs mixed emotions for me. On the one hand, it is such a loving image of God choosing to make us part of God's family - going out of the way to make us children of God's own. On the other hand, I hear a lot of the biblical witness saying that as creatures of God, created by God's hand, that fact alone makes us God's children. Are we or aren't we all God's children? I think we are...
- "The Beloved" from the Greek *agapema*, meaning, an object of love. Here Christ is called the beloved, the same word God speaks to Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan. Elsewhere in the scriptures, we are called beloved. My bishop, Bishop Violet Fisher, always opens her letters by addressing as *The Beloved*. Amazing comfort in little words.
- "having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will" - predestined, from the Greek *prooristhentes*, meaning "to determine beforehand". Are we predestined to be adopted or not adopted by God? To heaven or hell? If we believe that God has plans for our lives, which I do, how is that different than believing that God has determined already our final salvation/non-salvation, which I don't believe?

Mark 6:14-29:

- This text is another one that has dancing in it - a strange connection for texts.
- Foolishness - King Herod, walking the line with a chance of making a right or at least better decision, perhaps even somewhat intrigued by John, winds up, as the result of a drunken promise, beheading him. What is the most foolish thing you've ever done? How might things have been different in the long run if Herod had not been so foolish?
- How do you think John's disciples felt? The gospels tell us that they interacted, of course, with Jesus' disciples - do you think they were disillusioned? Went to follow Jesus? What do you think they did?
- Following news of these events, Jesus tries to withdraw from the crowds, but that's the text for another Sunday...

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The readings today all reflect what happens when realms clash. In the continuing saga of David, the king seeks to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, in a sense building his kingdom on his connection with God's Rulership, but his wife, Michal, the daughter of king Saul, whom he replaced, finds the expression of his devotion detestable and mocks him as a result. In Amos, the king clashes with the prophet's obedience to God's command to prophesy. In the Psalms God is praised as the Creator and "owner" of the earth who calls men and women to come to him in holiness and purity, and who saves those who honour God. In Ephesians the apostle reflects on the new realm of God into which both Jew and Gentile have been invited in Christ, and through which we know adoption as God's children and the gift of God's Spirit. Finally, in Mark's Gospel, human power clashes with God's power as Herod executes John the Baptist out of his own and his wife's anger at John's truth telling prophecies. It seems that the message of the Lectionary this week is about comparing human rulership and God's rulership. When human leaders become corrupt and set themselves up as the ultimate authority, as in the case of Saul (and, perhaps, represented here by his daughter Michal who had a chequered relationship with her husband, David), King Amaziah and King Herod, then God raises up prophets to speak truth and challenge them. But, when human leaders submit to God's authority and seek to bring their rulership in line with God's Reign, as with David and Paul, then they become the voice of God speaking truth to God's people. The issue, then, is not whether we have power or not, but whether it is exercised under the greater authority of God, for the good of God's Reign and God's people. If not, then leaders must expect prophets to come calling.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

Global Application:

It is important in any organisation, any nation, and on the global stage, that there are those who will speak truth to power. Leadership must always be held accountable to what are essentially the standards of God's Reign – justice, peace, equality, compassion, good management, and the good of the people and the planet. The problem is that leaders all too easily get co-opted into the agendas of special interest groups, and that's why prophets are always necessary. The danger, of course, is that prophets can end up being sacrificed as they come up against power that refuses to change or be challenged, or prophets can, themselves, be co-opted to the agenda of power. This is why we need to remain clear about our primary allegiance to God's Reign. When we understand our place in God's Reign in the way that Paul describes it in Ephesians, and when we couple that with the prophet's sense of call, we find that have both the courage to face whatever conflict or persecution may come from our calls to justice, and the integrity to remain faithful to God's Reign and avoid the temptations that inevitably seek to dilute our mission. This week, the Lectionary follows up on the reflections of some of the past weeks, in which we have examined our allegiances and explored what real authority means, with a call to remain true to the agenda of God's Reign and step up to be prophets that speak truth to power in whatever situation we find ourselves.

Local Application:

The big challenge of following Christ in our daily lives and our local situations is that we are all both "power" and "prophet". We all exercise authority in some situations, whether as parents, pastors or community leaders, and we all have times when we may be called to challenge those who are in authority over us in the interests of justice. In some situations

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we may even find ourselves playing both roles as we wrestle with our responsibility as leaders and our commitment to the principles of God's Reign – especially when the two aren't easily compatible. When it comes to dealing with power, two principles can always guide us at least to some extent. The first is to understand God's purposes, as described in Ephesians, and our place in it, allowing our belonging in God's family to become our primary identity. Then, the second principle, is to ensure that, whatever power or influence we may exert, it is always with reference to and in submission to, God's higher authority. In this way, even when we make mistakes or wrong decisions, we, and those with whom we live and work, can rest in the knowledge that our hearts were right.

SERMON OUTLINE

Mark 6:14-29 King Herod heard of it...

Heard of what?... the successful preaching, teaching, healing mission of the Twelve... Who was behind all this?

1. Herod's Fear 14-20: for the peace of the kingdom!

a) about Jesus – had executed John but some said *'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; & for this reason these powers are at work in him.'* - who was this?

b) about John – had arrested John for denouncing his marriage to Herodias *his brother Philip's wife... Herod feared John 20 - knowing that he was a righteous and holy man.... he protected him - he was greatly perplexed; & yet he liked to listen to him* – fascinated & intrigued...

2. Herod's Feast 21-25: *Herod on his birthday gave a banquet* – Salome, Herodias' daughter, *came in & danced, & pleased Herod & his guests* with the result that Herod carelessly offered *'Ask me for whatever you wish, 22 and I will give it.'* There came the infamous reply: *'The head of John the baptizer on a platter'* 24. Imagine his reaction!!

3. Herod's Failure 26-29: He failed to take a stand against Herodias & rescind his outrageous offer. He was caught in a trap of his own making - ²⁶*The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths & for the guests, he did not want to refuse her* – couldn't lose face! He failed to take the right course of action & yielded to pressure - *sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head.- beheaded him in the prison* - ²⁸*brought his head on a platter, & gave it to the girl - & the girl gave it to her mother* – gory story! John was subsequently buried – faithful to the end – true to his calling to be the herald of the King – taking his stand for truth & right... Do we? We give thanks for the life & witness of John the Baptist...

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Herod Antipas, Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

Another excellent Biblical picture sketch. Here is Buechner's description of Herod Antipas, first published in Peculiar Treasures and later in Beyond Words:

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-herod-antipas>

David's Dance, the Rev. Beth Birkholz, Day 1

Good Lutheran account of David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant.

http://day1.org/3941-davids_dance

[Two Very Different Banquets](http://day1.org/1259-two_very_different_banquets), the Rev. Dr. Barbara K. Lundblad, Day1

http://day1.org/1259-two_very_different_banquets

www.churchnewsireland.org

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["Who? Me?"](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3057) Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America: The National Catholic Weekly*
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3057

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Proper 10B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/year-b-proper-10-15th-sunday-in.html>

"Worship the King," Dianne Deming, Childrens Sermons Today
Explores church and traditions ...and David's dance.

<http://childrenssermonstoday.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/worship-king.html>

["Sermon of the Week,"](http://www.sermons4kids.com/) / ["Mensajes para ninos,"](http://www.sermons4kids.com/) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. <http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

[Gathering](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/lectionary), from the United Church of Canada. Includes sermon seeds, liturgical ideas, "with children," hymn suggestions, choral suggestions etc, 2012. ([Terms of Use](#))
<http://www.united-church.ca/planning/lectionary>

Hymn Suggestions

All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name

This Is My Father's World

The Lord Of The Dance

Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven

Let There Be Peace On Earth (Link to YouTube video)

How Great Is Our God (Link to YouTube video)

Every Nation

Undignified (Link to YouTube video)

We Bow Down Before You