

LIVING IN THAT DAY OF THE LORD

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this Second Sunday of the Epiphany season:

Then I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild ruined cities, and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine, and they shall make gardens and they will eat their fruit.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Once again, the Sunday readings of the Church have provided us with prophecy, fulfillment, and application. God had promised to the faithful through the former farmer, Amos: that He would bring days of restoration, of bountiful harvests and sweet new wine. In the account of the first public miracle executed by Jesus, we have heard of God's unveiling the onset of the days in which He began His work of restoration. In the words of St. Paul for this day, we have the revelation of God's on-going restoration of His people through His gifts in, for, and through the Church.

The readings for this day were chosen long ago that the hearer of the Word might have the Truth reinforced that God works His prophecy, fulfillment, and application for the good of His called people through Jesus Christ. Again, Christ is in the prophecy. Again, Christ is in the fulfillment. Again, Christ is the One who works the application of His Word in, for, and through those who are joined to Him. For we who are accustomed to hearing Christ-crucified as the beginning, end, and application of salvation, such reminders might appear to be overdone.

¹ *Isaiah 9:14.*

But, biblically speaking, can they be overdone? God repeated His message of Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of all our sins many times in the Gospels. God, through the Apostles and other New Testament writers, continually reinforced the proclamation of Christ-crucified as the means, impetus, and power to do true good in this fallen creation. God Himself used repetition in the books of Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets to lead the faithful to look for the coming Messiah to-be-crucified as the Author and Perfector of the Faith. You have heard such testimony today, beginning with these words from the mouth of the former sheepbreeder of Tekoa:

“In that Day, I will cause to raise up the fallen booth of David, and I will repair the breaches in it, and its ruins I will cause to raise up, and I will rebuild it as in days of old...”²

Those words were first spoken to the people under God’s Old Covenant.

They are found at the end of the Book now called Amos. They follow nine and a half chapters, as we number them now, of Law – words that convict, condemn and promise to kill – on account of that people’s unfaithfulness to God’s Covenant. The bulk of the content of Amos’ book is to call people to repent of their false worship, their accepting other gods, their trust in earthly rulers, and all their sins.

Against the multitude of punishments God promises the unfaithful, stands a few Hebrew words. Approximately 70 words of Gospel stand against 1,730 words of Law – and for the faithful, the Gospel predominates! That is because, in those whom God has worked faith, there is knowledge and hope, on account of God’s revealed Nature – that of Sacrificial, Unconditional, Lover of His people will care for them. Those

among us today who studied Amos at CLC a few years ago over several Thursday evenings likely are able to recall that now.

Just so, those who had studied the Book of Amos after 780 or so years had elapsed from their first proclamation, were to witness them begin their fulfillment at a wedding feast in Cana. Some did discover the connection between Amos' writing and Jesus' miracles, life, death and resurrection. (Today we have heard the Apostle John's testimony regarding the beginning of the days of God's fulfilling His Promise).

Today, in your ears, into your minds, hearts and souls, the Holy Spirit has uncovered for you the Promise of God. Here the Christ is again revealed in the Good News that begins: "In that Day." From its context and the biblical parallel use of that phrase, we know it means the Day of the Lord's fulfilling His promise to those who believe in Him. (Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we know that another Apostle, James, declares this Gospel of Amos section to be true of Jesus, and His coming for all peoples). God promises: "*In that Day, I will cause to raise up the fallen booth of David...*"

That means, in the day of the Lord's Promise He will restore the house of David, that which, when the words were first spoken, was a couple decades from destruction. This "House of David," King David's throne, the line of kings that descended from him, and even his city, would be completely overthrown repeatedly beginning with the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, and the southern

² *Isaiah 9:11.*

Kingdom in 586 BC. Those historical realities are what is meant by the description, “the fallen booth of David.”

No king of David’s line would rule in Jerusalem, over God’s people, until He began His Day. God says that He would be the efficient and effective cause of the resurrection of King David’s tabernacle. That He does in the Day of our Lord, Jesus son of David. God says of His time: *I will repair the breaches in it, and its ruins I will cause to raise up, and I will rebuild it as in days of old...* God promises to restore, that is bring to completion, that which He started in His promise to King David – to place a king from his descendants on his everlasting throne.

That promise could only be completed by an eternal King. That King again showed Who He is in the miracle of the new wine you heard about again today. In reality, the presence of the majority of you here today is because that King of David’s line called you out of sin, and this world – not on account of your human parentage, but on account of His grace.

For the majority here today, your coming into God’s Promise was foretold with these words from Amos:

I will rebuild it as in days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the Goyim which are called by My Name upon them,” says YHWH who does this.³

God was promising to those who would, many of them, suffer under the destruction of their land, and a long deportation, that He would, in the Day of His Promise, build the faithful into a New Israel. These He would use to bring others into

His Kingdom – beginning with some from whom were found their ancient enemies. His work through this New Israel would include those who we call “Gentiles,” which means, “those who are not of the blood-line of the Old Covenant people.”

God is saying what we continue to repeat – that it is He who calls people from all nations to bless them. He calls them, you, by the means He chose – His Word working through His people in the means of grace. He says that even we not born of Jewish mothers are to be included in that Day, by having His Name placed upon us. When did God place His Name upon you?

He named you His own in, with and under the Water and Word of Holy Baptism. God clearly declares that this naming is His work, even as He declares through the prophet: *says YHWH who does this.*⁴ (There is another Word of God to refute those who maintain that they chose Him)! God, through the former sheep-breeder sent to the Northern Kingdom, says,

*“Behold the days come,” says YHWH, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes the one sowing the seed, and the mountains shall be caused to drip new wine, and all the hills shall be caused to flow with it.”*⁵

God describes His time of blessing that will come to the faithful remnant of those who are soon to be destroyed and deported. He promises that “in that Day” of the Lord, the ground from which man was taken would be so rich, the climate so nice, that the one who prepares the ground for the next harvest would be found next to the one

³ *Isaiah* 9:11b- 12.

⁴ *Isaiah* 9:12b.

⁵ *Isaiah* 9:13.

reaping the last harvest. The terms plowing and reaping, grape-pressing and sowing all are used to show the superabundance of this Day of the Lord.

There is much more than a physical, earthly imagery in those words. For parallel texts tells us that our Lord used similar imagery to describe the sowing, tending, reaping and in-gathering to describe the work of His New Testament kingdom. Here, I am speaking of the proclamation of the Law that prepares the hearts, minds and spirits of the hearers for the sowing of the Good News of Jesus. In the Day of the Promise, the Word going forth would accomplish just what the prophet's words declare the Lord to be doing.

We are living in that Day of the Lord. It began to be revealed when the Gospel of Amos began to be completed – as new wine came forth from the stone from the earth, where only water once stood. (Yes, Cana, where the wedding feast took place, was in the hills of the former Northern Kingdom). From the Adamah (the ground) would come forth the Adam, again, renewed, and fully restored into the image of God. (That was declared with the ending words of the Gospel reading – *and His disciples believed in Him*.⁶ To His believing disciples, His followers, God still declares:

*Then I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild ruined cities, and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine, and they shall make gardens and they will eat their fruit.*⁷

This is, as is all that has gone before, a now and not yet, prophecy. The now is when Jesus came – to rebuild for Himself a people from those who were lost,

⁶ John 2:11c

downcast, and destroyed. It is not yet, for it also describes the Kingdom of God Triumphant. In that Day, the end of Days, the world and all that is in it will be cleansed with a rush of fire, and God will create a New Heavens and New Earth in which His people – you by grace through Jesus’ faith – will dwell forever.

That that Last Day is coming is foretold in the completion of the prophecy by the Lord’s miraculous turning water into wine. That which was begun at the feast in which God recalled to His people that He has blessed marriage in His Name, will be completed at the eternal wedding banquet.

That which is coming is even now yours to sample. Here, in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Table, are the first-fruits of that unending marriage feast. Called by God, those Named with His Name partake of the blessings and benefits He imparts through Word, bread and wine. We who have no genealogical right to the Table of Israel may feast here on the Body and Blood of the King because we have, through His action alone, died with Him, and risen to new life in Him. The food and drink of the Last Day Garden are here. To we who continue to confess the realities of God, His Real Presence among us, they bring forgiveness and strengthening to life everlasting.

The Gospel from Amos concludes with the promise that is “not yet” for us, while still being “now:”

Then I will plant them upon their land, and they shall not be plucked up again from all their ground which I gifted to them,” says YHWH your Elohe.⁸

⁷ *Isaiah* 9:14.

⁸ *Isaiah* 9:15.

Those words declare what is ours now. God has planted you here. He has granted this land called Marana to you that you might be His plowmen, sowers, tenders, reapers and distributors of His blessings. God gifts His Word to you, in this place. God invites you regularly to His wedding feast, in this place. God weekly sends you from this place to live in this land. God is using you, and will use you, to draw others to His Garden, to His food and drink, that His kingdom will grow.

God has promised that He will not tear out we who are from the dust from the ground of His Promised Land, the Church. He is faithful, and He will do it for *He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered.*⁹

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Epiphany II (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Amos 9:11-15; Romans 12:6-16; John 2:1-11

January 18, 2009

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT

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“Behold the days come,” says YHWH, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes the one sowing the seed, and the mountains shall be caused to drip new wine, and all the hills shall be caused to flow with it.”¹²

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Then I will plant them upon their land, and they shall not be plucked up again from all their ground which I gifted to them,” says YHWH your Elohe.¹⁴

⁹ Psalm 111:4.

¹⁰ Isaiah 9:11.

¹¹ Isaiah 9:12.

¹² Isaiah 9:13.

¹³ Isaiah 9:14.

¹⁴ Isaiah 9:15.