

Proper 10
Cycle C RCL

Amos 7:7-17

The first verse of the Book of Amos locates the prophet's career during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah (783-742 BCE) and Jeroboam II of Israel (786-746 BCE). He was a native of Tekoa in the Kingdom of Judah, but he prophesied in the northern Kingdom of Israel for reasons not disclosed in the book. Today's reading contains the only event in the life of Amos of which we have any knowledge. Although prophets in Judah had a certain independence to criticize the king, prophets in Israel were expected to support the king and his policies. (See 1 Kings 22:13-28.) Amos' claim not to be a prophet or a prophet's son (Amos 7:14) means that he was not trained in any of the prophetic schools and feels no constraint to act and preach like the court prophets of Jeroboam.

Psalm 82

This *hymn* addresses the question as to why there are no divine beings in the underworld. God and the hosts that serve him are only heavenly beings, and the underworld, as the Israelites understood it, was a shadowy realm inhabited only by the shades of the dead. One of the main functions of underworld gods in the mythologies of the ancient Near East was to provide justice for the world. This is the function which the gods, according to verses 2-4, have spectacularly failed to provide. The first verse of the psalm is very much like the account from Ugarit in Syria of the god Baal's judgment of the underworld gods Mot and Yamm.

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20 represents an addition to the covenant at Horeb between God and the people of Israel, and it presents a different viewpoint about the application of the covenant from that in the previous chapters of the book. The scene is set in Moab, with Israel poised to enter the Land of Promise which Moses may not enter. So Israel now hears Moses' third and last speech, summarizing the Lord's faithful acts in delivering Israel through forty years of wandering and saving them from enemies on their way (29:1-16). Characteristically, Moses warns of the destruction that will be theirs if they desert the Lord's commandments in the land they are about to possess. This great destruction, awful as it is, will be limited to the unfaithful generation. The next generation—as well as the nations—will see the destruction and resolve to follow the commandments. To these will the land and its riches be restored (29:18-29). The entire argument appears to anticipate the exile in Babylon that occurred in the 6th century BCE and so we believe the entirety of the addition represents a late, post-exilic editorial hand in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 emphasizes the humanity of the law, that it does not come reside with Shamesh (Sun-god) in the heavens (Babylon, Code of Hammurabi). The god Yamm (Sea god) cannot separate it from us, and it is as close to us as the thoughts of our minds and the utterance of our mouths.

Psalm 25

Laments are prayers that ask for God's help in time of trouble. They may be songs that admit wrongdoing as a reason for the trouble or insist upon the innocence of the psalmist. In the present psalm the psalmist admits having committed sin but argues that God should forgive that sin out of compassion (verses 5-6, 15), faithfulness to the covenant (verse 9), and for the sake of God's public reputation ("name," verse 10).

Colossians 1:1-14

There are many arguments for regarding Colossians as the work of a follower of Paul rather than of Paul himself. In addition to significant differences in vocabulary and style between Colossians and the indisputably Pauline letters, one of the most substantial arguments against Paul's authorship is that for Paul to have written Colossians means that he disregarded his own announced policy of not building on another evangelist's foundation (Romans 15:20). Paul did not organize the church in Colossae. Likely the church there was the result of the labors of Epaphras (1:7). Yet in the epistle the author weighs in against a false "philosophy" (2:8) that he believes threatens the Christians of the city.

Luke 10:25-37

The author has derived this exchange with the lawyer from Mark 12:28-34. (See also Matthew 22:34-40). The lawyer's summary of the Law contains quotations from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 and is not materially different from later Rabbinic summaries. What is different is the expansion of the concept of "neighbor." Whereas in Jewish Law the "neighbor" would likely be thought of as another Jew, our author has Jesus understand the concept universally in keeping with the Lucan theme of the universality of the Gospel. To that end we find joined to this dialogue the Parable of the Good Samaritan: Whoever gives aid to the Samaritan, whether priest or Samaritan, acted as the injured man's "neighbor."

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