

## Sunday Thought

17th July 2022 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Readings

Amos 8: 1 – 12  
Psalm 52  
Colossians 1: 15 - 28  
Luke 10: 38 – 42

### Not Angry – Just Hurt

It's the season of summer fruits – of strawberry teas, cherry pie and raspberry pavlova. Amos' vision of a basket of summer fruits was far less pleasurable. It was a sign of fruitful harvest and like every other harvest, it determined success and failure. It was judgement time! The reading from the prophet Amos, together with today's psalm (52), are reminiscent of our recent days both nationally and on the world stage. In fact, reading them was not unlike opening a current news magazine. The '*Time's Up*' theme is clear in pictures of poverty and famine, refugees seeking shelter, the poor being exploited by wealthy business leaders, climate changes, earthquakes, rampant spread of disease etc. Of course, Jesus did say these things will always be with us before judgement comes. The salient point in this gloomy picture is that '*words of falsehood are heard from razor-edged tongues while the word from the Lord falls on deaf ears.*'



Many of us struggle with the idea of God's judgement, or anger and the awful harvest consequences of sowing evil rather than good, contrary to God's laws. Jesus helps me understand. So did a simple family illustration. Little Shaun was adjusting to 'bedroom banishment'. Every day he seemed able to dream up some new expression of his 'naughtiness'. When Mum arrived for his reprieve, he penitently asked, 'Mum, are you still angry with me?' 'No', Mum replied. *I'm not angry. I love you and I want to help you because I hate to see you spoiling the real you.* That's God's word to us and all his creation. He finds no pleasure in seeing us suffer the consequences of not listening to him nor doing what he says. He loves us. What the Old Testament often calls 'God's anger' Jesus calls the Father's justice and love.' He adds grace to judgement. His Cross is the statement of the Father's love and what it costs him to continue loving us despite our very worst thoughts and actions. It is God's word to all his creation - including us. The truth is in the psalm. *During the worst calamity there are faithful believers who say, 'I will thank God for his goodness, and I will trust in his constant, eternal love.'*

In the reading from Paul's letter to the church in Colossae, he writes of this divine judgement being bound up with God's love. It is a favourite passage of mine. It gets to the heart of the Christian gospel – God was in Jesus! Many Christians still think and speak of the 'gentle Jesus' of their childhood, full of soft cuddly love. He was often gentle with some people though very stern with others. Listen to how Paul describes him.

*'Jesus is God – made visible so we may know him, hear him, respond to him. He is superior to all created things because the whole universe was made through him and for him with everything in its proper place. Through him God is bringing the whole universe back to himself by his sacrificial death on the Cross. We are included personally in that universe. God loves us. God hurts, with the pain of a Cross, over our failures - our wars, our cruelty, our compassion fatigue - because he wants us to be his friends. His one desire is for us to be pure, faultless, and to share his glory. Wow! I like to take time thinking on these things, almost word by word. Such grace! Jesus – my Almighty friend! Then I see him weeping at Lazarus' grave, and over the city of Jerusalem which was rejecting him – over me and my world! The sign of the Cross is our reminder of what it costs God to love his creation! Truly, such amazing grace!*



One more little homely scene comes from the gospel today. It's the familiar story where Jesus visits his friends, Mary and Martha and gets involved with reconciling the sisters who have become somewhat competitive about his company. It was not that Mary's attitude was right and Martha's wrong. I like to believe that Mary would help clearing up when the guests had left! Martha's problem was getting in a such a stew about the 'work' that she had no time to listen to Jesus. Martha could have listened while she worked. Some of our most memorable saints, like Brother Lawrence in the kitchen of his Carmelite monastery in seventeenth century Paris, were 'working listeners'. I feel sure, though, Mary would have 'filled Martha in' later!

I wonder if, years later, Martha and Mary sat down together remembering that day when the creator of the universe and Saviour of the world called by to chat with them about eternal things? Today, that is all he asks of national leaders and their people – time to listen and learn his way of peace and justice tempered by love.

**A prayer – whatever happens** [based on Psalm 52]

Lord, I see great leaders of people and nations who seem so selfishly proud of power and authority. I long for them to be even greater in their love for you and in faithfulness to your way of truth and justice.

For myself, I pray you will keep me faithful to you, listening to your words, following your way, always giving thanks for your sacrificial grace, loving the truth, sharing your sadness for all who choose not to understand you. Whatever happens, today, tomorrow, always, help me trust in your constant, never failing love.

