



# Fifth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019

## Interruptions



The Good Samaritan – Aimé Morot (1850-1913)

Last week, we reflected upon the priority of “doing” over “thinking” That is not to suggest that one excludes the other, but rather that the priority lies with action, and that thinking should be oriented towards action: action that heals, action that restores: that in short is what Christian living and discipleship is all about. It should be no surprise then, that today we come to a climax of sorts, as we read the Gospel today concerning the familiar narrative of the Good Samaritan. The Hebrew reading that accompanies the Good Samaritan is also matched well to the Gospel. It involves the conflict between the prophet Amos and the ‘establishment’ high priest of Bethel, Amaziah.

The theme for today is “Interruptions”: the interruption of the wounded man experienced by the Samaritan on his journey, the interruption that Amos constitutes to the religious, social, economic and political systems of the shrine at Bethel. In short, God often speaks to us through interruptions to our lives and to the systems in which we are immersed, calling us to become more human and Christian in the very same breath.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his little book “Life Together” (*Gemeinsames Leben*), wrote,

*We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and cancelling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions. We may pass them by...our systems, social political economic or religious, preoccupied with more important tasks, just as the priest passed by the man assaulted by thieves, lying on the roadside*

## GATHERING

### Announcements

### We Prepare as we Sing

#### Dona Nobis Pacem (Translation: Give Us Peace)

Pronounced Don-na No-beece Pah-chem

Traditional

1  
Do - na no - bis pa - cem. pa - cem. Do - na no - bis pa - cem.

2  
Do - na no - bis pa - cem. Do - na no - bis pa - cem.

3  
Do - na no - bis pa - cem. Do - na no - bis pa - cem.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
The Lord be with you  
***And also with you***

**Hymn: Let us Sing to the God of Salvation (TIS 52, Sing Hosanna,  
Richard Thomas Bewes)**

**“Interruptions”: A Prayer recognizing God speaking to us  
through those who interrupt us and make claims upon us**

(Inspired by the Gospel reading for the Day about the Good Samaritan and some notes of Martin Luther King’s)

Why didn’t the priest and Levite stop?  
Was it because they were pressed for time,  
having to get to a meeting, an ecclesiastical gathering?

***Through interruptions others  
speak to us,***

***give to us  
make claims upon us***

Why didn't the priest and Levite stop?  
Was it because of a priority for religious ceremony which required ritual cleanliness, ritual hygiene?  
Did love of God, impede, block, makes impossible, their love of the victim

***Through interruptions, God  
speaks to us,  
gives to us,  
makes claims upon us***

Why didn't the priest and Levite stop?  
Was it because of fear on a dangerous road, a road often called the 'Bloody Pass'?  
Were there other robbers cum assassins waiting?  
Was this man on the road just a lure, a trap?  
Was the question in their minds not a perfectly reasonable one: "If I stop to help this man what will happen to me"?

But the Samaritan asks another question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him"?

***Lord may we free ourselves from our fears of others.  
Help us to discern and experience you  
in those who interrupt our lives.***

**The Peace**

**Introduction**

**LET'S HEAR THE WORD**

**A Way into the Readings:  
Anecdotal Observations about the Way Fear Drives Us**

I had the most extraordinary experience of love of neighbour with a Hindu family. A gentleman came to our house and said: "Mother Teresa, there is a family who have not eaten for so long. Do something." So, I took some rice and went there immediately. And I saw the children - their eyes shining with hunger. I don't know if you have ever seen hunger. But I have seen it very often. And the mother of the family took the rice I gave her and went out. When she came back, I asked her: "Where did you go? What did you do?" And she gave me a very simple answer: "They are hungry also." What struck me was that she knew, and overcame her fear - and who are they? A Muslim family - and she knew. ...

### **Mother Teresa of Calcutta 1910-1997**

Love casts out fear, but we have to get over the fear in order to get close enough to love them.

### **Dorothy Day**

In an ecology of love, people can relate in trust and face the future without fear. They do not need to play it safe. They can take uncertainty in their stride.

### **Jonathan Sacks**

Faith and reason comprise a unity - neither exists without the other. Fear, which is "not a Christian habit of mind," imperils both.

### **Marilynne Robinson**

### **Amos 7:7-17 (The Message)**

Jill McNamara

According to the book given his name Amos was called from his life as a shepherd in Judah to speak a word from the Lord to the northern kingdom of Israel. We ought not to think of him as a humble young shepherd who followed the flocks over the hills. The word used to describe Amos as a 'shepherd' indicates that he was more likely a person of social standing who traded in sheep and goats and other agricultural products. Amos was called to speak to the powers of his day, a regime led by Jeroboam II, who was king of the Northern kingdom in the mid-700s BCE. It was a time of power and great prosperity, when the people of Israel assumed their privilege and affluence were evidence of God's blessings to them as the chosen people. They had forgotten their suffering as slaves in Egypt. As a consequence, they neglected to share the fruits of their prosperity with the poor. Their religious observance was disconnected from their social ethics and bereft of social justice. In the passage for this week, we have the third of five striking visions given to Amos, a prophetic word of judgment against the people of Israel and their rulers. It involves the image of the "plumb line," a bit of string with a weight used as a guide for measuring whether a wall has been built straight. The conclusion is that Israel is crooked. In verse 10 and

following, Amos spars with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, who questions his motives and message, complaining about Amos' dire words against the king. Amaziah, generously rewarded by the establishment, unsurprisingly represents his masters and their interests. Scripture makes clear that Yahweh sides with Amos, not Amaziah.

<sup>7</sup> GOD showed me this vision: My Master was standing beside a wall. In his hand he held a plumb line.

<sup>8-9</sup> GOD said to me, "What do you see, Amos?"

I said, "A plumb line."

Then my Master said, "Look what I've done. I've hung a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I've spared them for the last time. This is it!

"Isaac's sex-and-religion shrines will be smashed, Israel's unholy shrines will be knocked to pieces. I'm raising my sword against the royal family of Jeroboam."

<sup>10</sup> Amaziah, priest at the shrine at Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, king of Israel:

"Amos is plotting to get rid of you; and he's doing it as an insider, working from within Israel. His talk will destroy the country. He's got to be silenced. Do you know what Amos is saying?"

<sup>11</sup> 'Jeroboam will be killed.  
Israel is headed for exile.'

<sup>12-13</sup> Then Amaziah confronted Amos: "Seer, be on your way! Get out of here and go back to Judah where you came from! Hang out there. Do your preaching there. But no more preaching at Bethel! Don't show your face here again. This is the king's chapel. This is a royal shrine."

<sup>14-15</sup> But Amos stood up to Amaziah: "I never set up to be a preacher, never had plans to be a preacher. I raised cattle and I pruned trees. Then GOD took me off the farm and said, 'Go preach to my people Israel.'

<sup>16-17</sup> "So listen to GOD's Word.

Israel will be hauled off to exile, far from *home*."

The word of the Lord

***Thanks be to God***

## Psalm 82 - A psalm from the asaphorites – temple

Jill McNamara

Psalm 82 might appear a strange psalm to many. It is not so much a prayer to God or a psalm in which God's praise is clearly sung. It is more a description of a 'glimpse' into the heavenly sphere where we see Israel's God sitting in council with the gods of the other nations, judging them for their unjust actions and partiality toward the 'wicked'. The scene described clearly draws on myth and imagery from the ancient world around Israel. We might assume that Israel's allegiance to its God, Yahweh, meant that Israelites did not accept the existence of other gods. This is clearly the case late in Israel's religious history but it is not true for most of its existence, especially that time before people from Jerusalem were taken into exile in Babylon in 587BCE. There are several texts within the Old Testament from that earlier period which suggest that rather than being 'monotheistic' (i.e. believing in the existence of only one god), Israel was 'monolatrous' (i.e. worshipping only one god, while yet allowing the possible or assumed existence of other gods). In Psalm 82, Yahweh's case against the gods is that they have favoured injustice, have shown partiality to the wicked and not given justice to the poor. (vv. 2-3). Justice is presumed to have its basis in heaven and heavenly decrees. Our human acts of justice are to be sourced in that same arena. Injustice is not worthy of the word of God. To act justly, in work or family or society, at a personal level or a communal one, is to be about the work of God. Amos, in this week's first reading, complains about this lack of justice in his society, and hence the absence of God's presence in society.

<sup>1</sup> God presides in the great assembly;

he renders judgment among the "gods":

<sup>2</sup> ***"How long will you<sup>[a]</sup> defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?"<sup>[b]</sup>***

<sup>3</sup> Defend the weak and the fatherless;

uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

<sup>4</sup> ***Rescue the weak and the needy;***

***deliver them from the hand of the wicked.***

<sup>5</sup> "The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing.

They walk about in darkness;

all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

<sup>6</sup> ***"I said, 'You are "gods";***

***you are all sons of the Most High.'***

<sup>7</sup> But you will die like mere mortals;

you will fall like every other ruler."

<sup>8</sup> ***Rise up, O God, judge the earth,***

***for all the nations are your inheritance.***

## Luke 10:25-3 (The Message)

Ron Wiley

Christians often have an inadequate understanding of the relationship between love for God (verticalist dimension) and love for creation, meaning human beings and more (horizontalist dimension). Sometimes, the view is that I love my neighbour as part of

loving God, but this is unstable. It makes the love for others, secondary, but also, makes of the neighbour, the mere means to the primary relationship with God. In part, this explains why so many Christians are 'soft' when it comes to issues of social justice. In this story, it is precisely the priest and Levite's loyalty to God, through the lens of ritual purity, that makes it impossible for them to stop and attend to the victim on the road. Faith affiliation actively blocks human connection and solidarity. In this famous narrative, the point of which is often missed, Jesus points out that rather than representing human systems – religious social, political and economic – God represents *the interruption* of those systems. Instead of religiously setting limits to whom we love and whom we don't (the intent of the religious scholar and his creed), Jesus' response is about becoming a neighbour, beyond the limits that communities invariably set for themselves.

<sup>25</sup> Just then a religious scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup> He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?"

<sup>27</sup> He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbour as well as you do yourself."

<sup>28</sup> "Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live."

<sup>29</sup> Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbour'?"

<sup>30-32</sup> Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

<sup>33-35</sup> "A Samaritan travelling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back.'

<sup>36</sup> "What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbour to the man attacked by robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded.

Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**Hymn: Lord hear my praying (TiS 689, Lara, Robin Mann)**

### **A film clip from "The Lives of Others" (Das Leben den Anderen)**

In 1984 East Germany, Stasi *Hauptmann* Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe), code name HGW XX/7, is ordered to spy on the playwright Georg Dreyman (Sebastian Koch), who has escaped state scrutiny due to his 'pro-Communist views' and international recognition. Wiesler and his team bug the apartment, set up surveillance equipment in an attic, and begin reporting Dreyman's activities. Over time however, Wiesler becomes drawn into the lives of Dreyman and his partner Christa-Maria Sieland (Martina Gedeck), covering for them in order that they escape detection. For Wiesler, this dissident couple become an *interruption*, that saves his conscience and humanity. Wiesler is suspected of disloyalty to the Stasi, and he is dismissed and persecuted: becoming a lowly a postman. Years later, after the fall of East Germany, Wiesler on his postal rounds, passes a bookstore window display promoting Dreyman's new novel, *Sonata of a Good Man (Sonate vom Guten Menschen)* He goes inside and opens a copy of the book, discovering it is dedicated "To HGW XX/7, in gratitude". Deeply moved, Wiesler buys the book. When the sales clerk asks if he wants it gift-wrapped, he responds, "No. This is for me."

### **Some Thoughts....**

### **Let's Give: Our Offerings**

#### **Doxology**

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

#### **Prayers of the People**

Annette Burne

The one who prays, offers the words "Interrupt us Lord" at the end of each petition, and the community responds with "to be your people in the world".



## **Closing Hymn: You have come down to the lakeshore (Tú has venido a la orilla, Pescador de hombres, Cesáreo Gabarain)**

1. You have come down to the lakeshore  
seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy  
but only asking for me to follow.

*Jesus, you have looked into my eyes;  
kindly smiling, you've called out my name.  
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;  
now with you I will seek other seas.*

2. You know full well my possessions  
neither treasure nor weapons for conquest  
just these my fishnets and will for working.

*Refrain*

3. You need my hands, my exhaustion  
working love for the rest of the weary  
a love that's willing to go on loving

*Refrain*

4. *Tu has venido a la orilla  
no has buscado ni a sabios, ni a ricos,  
tan solo quieres que yo te siga.*

*Jesus, me has mirado a los ojos  
sonriendo, has dicho mi nombre,  
en la arena he dejado mi barca;  
junto a ti buscare otro mar.*

## **Blessing and Sending Out**

Christ is life!

God of life, Mother of all, you renew creation.

Bring us peace and justice, 'balance':

balance and harmony for the earth,  
balance and harmony for the peoples of the world,  
balance and harmony for men and women,  
balance and harmony between nature and ourselves and  
God. (Mapuche Blessing)

***In the name of Christ***

**Going Out: Shalom to You (TIS 778, Spanish melody, Elise  
Shoemaker Eslinger)**

**Musical Postlude**

**Organist:**

John Hughes