

## The Seventh Sunday after Trinity, YEAR C, July 10, 2016

In the lectionary this week we find the powerful metaphor in Amos of God's plumb line – the measure of God's people and their faithfulness to God's purposes. Then, alongside this\*, the Gospel places the parable of the Good Samaritan – clearly the plumb line measures things differently from how we normally would! So, the question is how do we measure our spirituality, our faithfulness to Christ and our living of God's Kingdom principles and values? Once again, we are reminded that God measures not by success, or power or money, but by compassion, service and sacrifice.

May your worship be uncomfortable this week, as you invite God to measure you against God's standards of grace and mercy.

### INTRODUCTIONS

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

**Amos 7:7-17:** God gives Amos a vision of a plumb line, and prophesies that Israel is to be destroyed. When the high priest, Amaziah, tells Amos to go home and stop prophesying, Amos (the 'unprophet' – shepherd and farmer) speaks judgment on him as well.

OR **Deuteronomy 30:9-14:** Prosperity and blessing is promised for those who obey God's commands, which are not far off or distant. They are as close as our own lips and hearts.

**Psalm 82:** A prayer for God to judge oppressive rulers, because all nations belong to God.

OR **Psalm 25:1-10:** A psalm in which David prays to be protected and guided into right ways of living by God, and affirming the promise of God's goodness for those who follow God's guidance and commands.

**Colossians 1:1-14:** Paul's prayer for the Colossians to continue to grow in wisdom, strength and joy, and to enjoy the inheritance of freedom that God has made available through Christ.

**Luke 10:25-37:** In response to the question of how eternal life can be inherited, Jesus offers the Great Commandment, and then explains the practical outworking of this through the story of the Samaritan who helped the man beaten by robbers on the road to Jericho.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Amos%207:%207-17%0Acw%20Psalm%2082%0AColossians%201:%201-14%0ALuke%2010:%2025-37](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Amos%207:%207-17%0Acw%20Psalm%2082%0AColossians%201:%201-14%0ALuke%2010:%2025-37)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

Lord of all power and might,  
who art the author and giver of all good things;  
Graft in our hearts the love of thy Name,  
increase in us true religion,  
nourish us with all goodness,  
and of thy great mercy keep us in the same;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### Collect Two

Lord of all power and might,  
the author and giver of all good things:

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

Graft in our hearts the love of your name,  
increase in us true religion,  
nourish us with all goodness,  
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Your Kingdom Come*

We believe in God, creator of the world and of all people;  
and in Jesus Christ, incarnate among us, who died and rose again;  
and in the Holy Spirit, present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort.

**We believe,  
Lord, help our unbelief.**

We rejoice in every sign of God's kingdom:  
in the upholding of human dignity and community; in every expression of love, justice, and reconciliation; in each act of self-giving on behalf of others; in the abundance of God's gifts entrusted to us that all may have enough; in all responsible use of the earth's resources.

**Glorify to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.**

We confess our sin, individual and collective, by silence or action:  
through the violation of human dignity based on race, class, age, sex, nation, or faith;  
through the exploitation of people by greed and indifference; through the misuse of power in personal, communal, national, and international life; through the search for security by military and economic forces that threaten human existence:  
through the abuse of technology which endangers the earth and all life upon it.

**Lord have mercy.  
Christ have mercy.  
Lord have mercy.**

We commit ourselves individually and as a community  
to the way of Christ;  
to take up the cross;  
to seek abundant life for all humanity;  
to struggle for peace with justice and freedom;  
to rise ourselves in faith, hope, and love,  
praying that God's kingdom may come.

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

*- 15th World Methodist Council, Nairobi, Kenya, 1986.*

## POST COMMUNION

Lord God,  
whose Son is the true vine and the source of life,  
ever giving himself that the world may live:  
May we so receive within ourselves  
the power of his death and passion  
that, in his saving cup,

we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love;  
for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

## PRAYERS

Give us, we pray, gentle God, a mind forgetful of past injury, a will to seek the good of others and a heart of love, that we may learn to live in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we pray. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

Eternal God, giver of love and peace, you call your children to live together as one family. Give us grace to learn your ways and to do your will, that we may bring justice and peace to all people, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love towards you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Common Worship*

Creator God, you made us all in your image: may we discern you in all that we do; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Common Worship Shorter Collect*

Grant, O Lord, that in your wounds I may find my safety; in your stripes, my cure; in your pain, my peace; in your Cross, my victory; in your resurrection, my triumph; and in the glory of your kingdom, a crown of righteousness; for your tender mercy's sake. Amen  
Jeremy Taylor, 1613-1667

Guide us by your unchangeable Spirit, O God, that we may seek peace and pursue it, that we may follow in the way of righteousness, increase in our knowledge of the one true light and seek the goodness and welfare of all, until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of Christ, for ever and ever. Amen. George Fox (1624-1691)

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified:  
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Eternal God, giver of love and peace, you call your children to live together as one family. Give us grace to learn your ways and to do your will, that we may bring justice and peace to all people, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of justice,  
your word is light and truth.  
Let your face shine on us to restore us,  
that we may walk in your way,  
seeking justice and doing good. 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 neighbours as ourselves,  
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions  
on behalf of the church and the world.  
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.  
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.  
Hear our prayers  
that we may love you with our whole being  
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

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.  
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 neighbours,  
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.  
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.  
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,  
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings  
with your unending compassion.  
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.

Divine Judge,  
you framed the earth with love and mercy  
and declared it good;  
yet we, desiring to justify ourselves,  
judge others harshly,  
without knowledge or understanding.  
Keep us faithful in prayer  
that we may be filled with the knowledge of your will,  
and not ignore or pass by another's need,  
but plumb the depths of love in showing mercy. Amen.

Almighty God,  
you give the holy law to your people  
so that it will always be near us and our children.  
Through our Lord Jesus who has fulfilled the law in every way,  
grant that we may love you with heart, soul, strength, and mind,  
and our neighbour as ourselves. Amen.

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

### Marks of a New Self

Amos 7:7-17; Psalm 82; Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37

The church never finishes wondering about the way it is to live. It's called "ethics," but in fact it is a practice of glad obedience to the one we love supremely. Paul commends the church in Colossai to "lead lives worthy of the Lord" (1:10). The purpose is to be "fully pleasing to him," which is done by "bearing fruit" in "every good work." In Colossians

3:10-13, Paul writes of “the new self” that is marked by “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” and, above all, “forgiveness.” Paul invites them to a radical decision concerning the character and action of “the new self.”

These readings sketch out “the new self” who is to live in the world differently. The gospel offers the model of “the Good Samaritan,” who reaches across ethnic and social boundaries in an act of neighborliness. Specifically, it is an offer of generous healthcare to one unlike himself. Jesus draws the conclusion that “mercy” is the primal mark of genuine neighborliness (Luke 10:37).

In the Amos narrative of confrontation between the prophet and the royal priest, the prophet’s accusations against the regime are harsh. Earlier Amos has variously urged social justice and condemned those who refused such social practice (see 4:1-3, 5:14, 6:4-7, and 8:4-6). Now he indicts the royal establishment for its failure of justice.

In Psalm 82, remarkably, the poetry suggests that even the gods are held to such neighborly expectations to “Give justice to the weak and the orphan ... Rescue the weak and the needy” (verses 3-4).

All of these texts concern “the new self” in the new community in response to the newness of God. “Worthy of the Lord” consists in neighborly mercy and justice, a life congruent with God’s own life.

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## LECTIONARY NOTES 2

### REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

It is a challenging exercise to hold the prophecy of Amos alongside the parable of the Good Samaritan, but this is what the lectionary calls us to do this week. On the one hand we find God’s judgment expressed against God’s unfaithful people who, as we know from biblical history and from other parts of Amos’ prophecy, had neglected justice and mercy. The Deuteronomy reading is simply a contrast to this – blessing and prosperity is found when God’s commands (to love and to live justly and compassionately) are obeyed. The Psalms echo these words in contrasting songs as well – judgment on oppressive and unjust rulers; blessing on the one who prays for God’s guidance and the strength to follow God’s commands. On the other hand, we have the way to life explained clearly and powerfully through the association of the Great Commandment with the parable. The message is strong and clear – God asks one thing from God’s people: to be people of love, mercy and justice. And, when we embrace this call, we will, inevitably, know better relationships, and more peaceful and prosperous societies – not so much as a reward, but as a simple consequence of the work of love and justice that we have done in God’s strength. Essentially, in his prayer, Paul celebrates the way this has already happened for people who have responded to the Gospel, and prays for ongoing strength for the Colossian Church to continue to live this way and enjoy the fruit that such a life brings. If the plumb line is the sign of God’s measurement of God’s people, the Good Samaritan is the picture of what the plumb line is actually measuring.

### CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** It is popular to speak of nations, governments, companies and prominent individuals as “great”. Usually what we mean by this word relates to dominance

over others, a unique ability to wield power, the accumulation of wealth beyond the highest levels of 'normal' or in some other way becoming 'bigger' than others. And the way we measure this 'greatness' is in quarterly performance reviews and financial statements. The Scriptures, however, define 'greatness' very differently, and measure it against an eternal time frame. Israel's prosperity means nothing if they fail to follow God's command to uphold justice, mercy and love. Oppressive rulers are not 'great', according the Psalmists, they are to be humbled by God, while those who humble themselves and pray for God's strength to follow the law of love are honourable. The 'great' religious leaders in Jesus' parable are shown with far less than true greatness, while a hated outsider is used to demonstrate the true greatness of service. Perhaps it would be good if we began to measure our governments, companies and communities not so much by economic growth, military dominance or political influence, but by self-giving, service and contribution to the greater good. What might our world be like if we started to hold our nations and leaders to this standard of greatness, If we measured our policies and successes by God's plumb line of love?

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** The power of the Gospel is revealed in Paul's prayer – that those who embrace it find joy, strength and vibrant life in love for, and service of, others – in the fruit they bear for God's Kingdom, and the benefit people experience through this loving, serving community. What a pity that the Church is so often seen by those outside as hypocritical, judgmental and self-serving. What a pity that we have fallen into the trap of measuring spirituality and godliness by the same standards that society uses to measure worldly success – wealth and power. How different might our impact on the world be if we learned to assess ourselves not against the latest 'technique' or formula, but against God's standard of love, compassion, justice and service? How different might our communities feel about us as Church if we were more other-centred, more willing to sacrifice not just money, but time and energy in making our communities more peaceful, equitable and whole? How attractive might communities of faith be if we actually lived what we proclaimed and sang? How would we measure up as a local church if we honestly and ruthlessly measured ourselves against God's plumb line?

## ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"Paying the Price of Mercy," the Rev. Danae Ashley, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/06/26/8-pentecost-proper-10-c-2013/>

"Yeah, I Know--I'm Just a Drunk," the Rev. Jonathan Currier, Day 1

<http://day1.org/5012-yeah-i-know-im-just-a-drunk>

"Tell Me a Story," the Rev. Christopher Henry, *Day 1*, 2010.

<http://day1.org/2081-tell-me-a-story>

"How Not to Inherent Eternal Life," Alyce McKenzie, sermon series on Lukan texts, *Patheos*, 2010.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/faithforward/2010/07/july-11-2010-how-not-to-inherit-eternal-life-luke-1025-37/>

"Meeting the Good Samaritan," the Rev. Thomas G. Long, *Day 1*, 2007.

<http://day1.org/1051-meeting-the-good-samaritan>

## CHILDREN

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

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/year-c-proper-10-15th-sunday-in.html>

"I Am the ...," On the Chancel Steps, children's resources by Frances Woodruff

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2013/07/02/am/>

Children's Sermon, Faith Formation Journeys, 2013, will be posted during the week.

<http://faithformationjourneys.org/>

[Sermon of the Week](#), Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

O Love How Deep

O For A Heart To Praise My God

A Charge To Keep I Have

Jesus, United By Thy Grace

Plumb Line

God Of Justice (YouTube video)

May The Words Of My Mouth (YouTube video)

Servant Song (YouTube video)

Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace (YouTube video)

The Servant King (YouTube video)