

# Season after PENTECOST

## Prayer

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

### Collect of the Day

O Lord, You granted Your prophets strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance. Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Scripture Readings

Psalms 85:(1-7) 8-13  
(antiphon v. 7)  
Amos 7:7-15  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
Mark 6:14-29

### Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 743  
Other Hymns – 682 (OT), 819 (E),  
518 st. 1, 24, 3 (G), 587, 917

Preserve Your Church, O Lord, in Your righteousness for Your name's sake. Since You have sent us forth in this world to testify to Your Word, strengthen us in our conviction and confidence in the confession that salvation is found in the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus alone. Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

Sustain the preachers You send into this world, O Lord. Make them bold to proclaim Your Law against sin, and grant that Your Spirit would work powerfully in that Word to humble the proud and bring them to repentance, that they would hear the Gospel and receive the forgiveness of sins won for them by Christ. Vindicate all who suffer for continuing steadfast in their callings, and keep us from despising Your Word of correction. Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

Preserve Your blessed estate of marriage, O Lord. Let chastity be prized among Your Christians and honoured also in the world. Bind husbands and wives together in love and forgiveness. Equip them by Your Spirit with every good gift to care for and teach the children You give. Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

You, O Lord, are King over all the earth. You bring ruin on wicked nations and their rulers and are no respecter of persons. Spare our nation and its leaders, O Lord. Let the conduct of our civil servants and of our people be wise, just, honorable and in accord with Your revealed will. For the sake of Christ, be merciful to those who oppose You, and bring them to repentance that they may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

Emboldened by our adoption into Your family through Jesus Christ, O heavenly Father, we bring before You every need of body and soul. Lavish the riches of Your grace and mercy on us and especially on \_\_\_\_\_. Lord, in Your mercy; hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, heavenly Father, for the sake of Your dear Son who died and rose again and who now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. Amen.

# *Season after* **PENTECOST SERMON**

## **SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Proper 10) July 11, 2021**

**Sermon Text: Mark 6:14-29**

*'From John To Jesus'*

Jesus was famous. After only a few months of healing and teaching, news of the miracle-working prophet filtered all the way to the king's court. And King Herod was afraid. He thought Jesus was John the Baptist come back from the grave!

Now, Herod had a real reason to be scared; after all, he had executed John. And if he was back from the dead? Well, that would be his worst nightmare come true! It's an odd situation when you think about it. Herod had respected John. He knew John was a prophet of the Lord God because John spoke God's truth. Herod did not, however, like what John preached; but he knew enough not to permanently silence a prophet of the Lord. And so, Herod locked him away in a jail cell . . . safe and sound, conveniently out of harm's way.

But then, Herod had one of those parties he would soon regret. He drank a bit too much, enjoyed his niece/('slash') daughter-in-law's sexual and provocative dancing a bit too much and promised a bit too much in front of his guests. He promised to give her up to half of his kingdom. This was all a rather sick and disgusting thing when you think about it. This was his step-daughter, after all. But Herodias, the girl's mother and Herod's most recent wife, saw an opportunity in her husband's weakness to finally have John killed. She hated the prophet because he had the nerve to point out how sinful her relationship with Herod was. Who cared that she was the wife of Herod's brother? She should be able to do what she wanted without anyone judging her. It was time to silence the prophet once and for all, and so she asked for the prophet's head as the gift. Herod, embarrassed and pressured by his drink-induced promise before his guests, had to oblige and so John was killed . . . beheaded actually.

Now, throughout the Bible there is one thing we notice about prophets. They had very hard lives. Speaking the truth of God's Word doesn't always receive the

warmest welcome. “You shall not steal! You shall not murder! You shall not commit adultery! You shall not covet! You shall not have any other gods before the Lord” We know those commandments, and they all sound fine . . . until we get into the ‘nitty-gritty’ of what they actually mean.

“You shall not steal” means don’t take things that don’t belong to you . . . and not just goods, be even your time is something we steal all too often. In other words, when you are at work, fulfill your allotted hours properly, not stealing time from your employers by doing nothing. On the flip side, employers also need to pay their workers a fair wage for the work done.

“You shall not murder” doesn’t just mean the rage-induced taking of human life. It means we actually have to help those in need to support their body and life when we can. So this command includes the need to protect the lives of unborn children from abortion, and the elderly and gravely ill from doctor-assisted killing.

“You shall not commit adultery” isn’t just talking about pre-marital sex, but any and all extra-marital sex, including all the various perversions of sexual pairings or whatever that gets promoted by our sex-obsessed society as normal and healthy and good. Marriage is to be one man and one woman until death separates them.

“You shall not covet” means we should be satisfied with what we have been given by our heavenly Father and not use our every waking hour to chase after things that we don’t have, things that will only rot and decay anyhow and go in the waste pile.

And then, “You shall have no other gods before the Lord your God” means to have nothing else in all of life that you fear, nothing else that you place your trust or worries in, no one else in all the world in whose hands you would place your life, most especially, not ourselves! No one, nothing else but God alone!

Feeling comfy anymore? Not likely. The Law strikes fear in all of us. We fail to keep God’s Law on a daily basis. The Law’s truthfulness cuts deep into everyone’s heart. Not one of us is perfect or holy or good. Heart and mind, words and deeds, we break the Law of the Lord far too often. Yet, this Law is God’s own truth given to us for our good, to show us how we are supposed to be living. Our old sinful nature, however, hates this Law because we want to be able to do our own thing. It would be far easier for us to simply lock this Law away in a deep dungeon, never to hear of it again.

When we listen to God's Law, we can try to put it in a box like Herod did with John and pay no more heed to it; but God's Word still stands. We can connive to do away with it as Herodias tried to do by asking for John's head on a platter, but silencing the prophet will not change God's Word either. God's Word remains; and for an unrepentant heart, that word means death. Eternal, never-ending death. And that is not a good word to hear, is it?

It's sad to think that Herod thought Jesus was just John somehow alive again and coming to get him. It's sadder still that Herod never understood John's preaching, because John's preaching of the Law was so severe, not to condemn people, but to show them that their only hope was in God's forgiveness through repentance and the waters of Holy Baptism!

John was calling everyone who would listen to repent of their sins. His bold preaching of the Law was all about making people realize they need a Saviour, and that included proud kings and their consorts. This Law was meant to make everyone uncomfortable, to make them squirm, to make each one of us despair utterly of ourselves. Moreover, John's mission was to point sinners to their only Saviour – Jesus Christ.

And that is God's final word – a word of mercy . . . fully embodied in His own Son who came from heaven above to bring mercy to the downtrodden, health to the sick and needy, forgiveness to those dead in their trespasses and sins. He came to bring us life by taking away our sins. To be sure, hearing the plain statements of the Law is unnerving and uncomfortable, especially if that is all we hear from God. The Law is perfect and it very forcefully shows us that we are not. The Law tears down our pride and illuminates our sins in all their damnable severity. But the Law is not God's final word for us . . . Jesus is.

No, Herod was not god. Herodias was not god. You are not god. Only our Father in heaven above is God. And do you know what? He loves us . . . loves sinners. And He shows the extent of that love by sending His true and only Son, Jesus, who became one with us in our human flesh and blood to live and die for us . . . who stepped into John's water of Baptism declaring Himself one with us . . . who took on Himself all our sins, and died for those sins upon the cross . . . who Himself suffered His Father's wrath against ours sins . . . and who rose again on Easter morning to proclaim his victory over sin, death, and the devil.

And when our sins confound us, when we think we cannot be loved because of what we have done wrong in our lives; know that God is not just a God of Laws,

but that he is also a God of mercy and love. Our heavenly Father knows our sin; and so, let us confess it rather than deny it or ignore it or seek to justify it. Let us repent of every wrong and turn back to our God so that we no longer see a wrathful judge, but our Saviour . . . a Saviour who loves us so much that He fulfilled the Law of God perfectly for us, and has taken away our punishment, thereby setting us free.

And do you know what? Our baptism already covers us in Jesus' righteousness. We belong to God and He wants us to be alive in our renewed life – our Jesus-filled life. So St Paul says in Ephesians, we are “blessed . . . in Christ with every spiritual blessing.” And so, let us live in Christ. Do not give in to the anger of the old way of life that seeks to war against, hide from, and ignore God's Law. Instead, be free in Jesus . . . free from sin, free from guilt, free from condemnation and worry. After all, in Him you are forgiven, and a dearly loved child of His heavenly Father.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.