

Sermon July 14, 2015  
Year B  
Amos 7:7-15  
Psalm 85:8-13  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
Mark 6: 14-29

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight oh Lord, my redeemer, creator and friend.

I know you were wondering what I was going to do with the Gospel reading, my daughter even suggested certain treats for coffee hour but I couldn't go there. Today I'd rather focus on the Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It is felt that this letter was written when Paul was in prison. Some theologians even question as to whether it was actually written by Paul as the language is very different from his other letters but the message is clear. It gives us the image of God, as a God who has chosen his believers, chosen us, you and me as his people. We are set apart as Christians to be different, to be holy. God has chosen us for adoption as the children of God. The meaning of adoption was totally different in Jesus' day and has serious implications. Paul shares with the Ephesians that God will continue to bless them and us, with goodness and peace of mind as God showers his grace upon us to work through issues in the world. By these standards it should be possible to identify a Christian in school, in work the work place and in the community.

Anyone one of these topics is worthy of a sermon unto itself, but I was drawn to the word Adoption. Thinking about what it meant to me earlier in my life as Dick and I were told that we would never have children and learning what it meant in Jesus time to be adopted were two very different concepts. Adoption to me seemed like an answer to our prayers, that the joy of having, loving and raising a child was still a possibility when all other hope had been extinguished. Adoption in Jesus time was very different. As a father you owned your sons or daughters, you could trade them for goods, sell them in slavery, they were your property for their whole lives. Not just until they were 18 or 21. Even as they grew, as a working adult all that they

earned, all that they had, all that they were, belonged to the father. It has made me think what it means to be adopted by God through our Lord Jesus Christ as children of God. It brings new light to the words of our baptism when it is said "You are marked as Christ's own Forever".

By adoption we are God's chosen people, chosen by God to be different, to be a holy people, to be set apart. This offer of adoption by God is for all people of Jesus time, the Jews, the lowly gentiles, tax collectors, prostitutes, fishermen, lepers and those that were in prison for various sins. Jesus surrounded himself with people thought to be the low life of society as Dick keeps repeating since coming home from General Convention, "Jesus was messy, he was a rebel in his own time". God called these people to a Holy life through our Lord Jesus Christ. He blessed them and us with his Grace to be His chosen people so that we might choose to be different, to be kind and caring, to sow love, hope, joy and faith in times of despair, darkness, doubt and sadness. For God to adopt us as his own was huge by the standards of the day and are still of enormous proportions today. God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who loving adopted us so that we might shine a light in the world as the people of God is amazing.

I think back to a trip that I chaperoned for the youth from the Diocese of Maine to the Nightwatch Program at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on the edge of Harlem. The cathedral had many outreach programs to the people of Harlem, a stone cutting school, soup kitchen, a shelter for the destitute. We had many speakers that we peppered with questions. One middle-aged man shared with us that he had once lived as a drug addict, homeless and destitute on the streets of Harlem. He asked the youth what they thought might be the reasons that he found himself in this state and how much education they thought he had. Of course they thought he had been a high school drop out because of the drug addiction and that possibly he might have been beaten at home but this was not the case. He and his wife were well educated, master's degrees, both working and raising a beautiful little son. Quite suddenly his little son became ill and died, over the next six months they grieved tremendously so much so that his wife committed suicide, he lost his job and ended up living on the streets. On the streets he became addicted to drugs

to dull the pain. He felt that this had happened this way because they had no faith to lift them from their despair. He was not in his eyes a child of God but had through the help of the people of the cathedral had been adopted by God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He truly felt that he had been saved from a life of despair. God's Grace had saved him and now he was able to help others.

He asked all of us to look at people through a different lens, the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ to see deep within their soul. To try to get past the color of their skin, the odor of the unbathed, the rags that they might be wearing to whatever might make them different and see deep within to their soul to see our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and dwells within each and every one of us.

This is the call we hear today in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we are all God's chosen people through adoption and we are called to look at each individual soul we come in touch with, through the eyes of Jesus. God will give each one of us the Grace that we need to be the child of God that he has called us to be. At times it may be tough to get through the discord and problems in our lives but as God's own we are called to do just that. We are called to love, to understand, to console, to pardon, to shine light in the darkness, to be an instrument of God's peace. Amen