

ADDRESS GIVEN AT SJH GIFT SUNDAY TRINITY 7 WEEK 15 YEAR B 15 JULY 2018

READING FROM AMOS

He wasn't a religious professional, but God chose him to tell the people of Israel they were doing what was wrong; they were harming each other, disobeying God and not worshipping him. They were worshipping other things, invented by people.

Let's try to do what is good, love other people, and worship God. God may speak to us through others, and he might want us to give a message to them. Can we be prophets?

Danger: if someone turns up on my doorstep and says he or she has a message from God I would initially be doubtful. But Amos was not giving a new message, or one he'd invented – he was calling his hearers to be faithful to the law that God had given them centuries before.

READING FROM EPHESIANS

Religion isn't just about us trying to be good people. God gives us marvellous blessings. Jesus Christ is his Son, and through Jesus' death and resurrection God adopts us as his children. What Jesus is, we can become. We are 'in Christ' – an expression S. Paul uses eight times in the twelve verses of this reading. We're in a new family, the wrong things we have done are forgiven, and we'll live to praise God. We may live in a hard world but we also live in God's world.

READING FROM MARK

This reading could come out of 'Horrible Histories'. It's about a beheading. John the Baptist was like Amos – telling people to give up what was wrong and to do what was right. He told king Herod that he should not have married someone who'd been his brother's wife – and was therefore put into prison. We shall hear how the story ends.

In some ways John the Baptist and Jesus are similar. Both proclaimed a message from God. Both were put to death by weak rulers who had some sympathy for them, but gave in to the demands of other people.

In other ways John and Jesus are different. John never said to people, "Follow me!". Jesus did. John was the forerunner, whose preaching and death pointed towards Jesus. John was not raised from the dead; Jesus was. And that makes it possible for us to be his followers today. Herod's banquet resulted in the death of a holy man. We're at a banquet today – the mass where we share food and drink. Through the death of Jesus it becomes for us a banquet of grace, forgiveness and life.