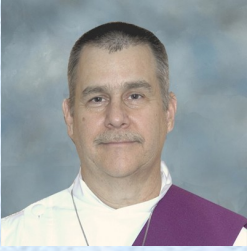


## Homily Rerun: September 18, 2016 ~ Deacon Bruce



Our first reading from the prophet Amos takes place after Kings David and Solomon. The whole kingdom has been split with 10 tribes in a Northern Kingdom, called "Israel." The Northern Kingdom has turned to false gods, like Baal and Ashima, The remaining two tribes have the Southern Kingdom which includes Jerusalem. This area is called "Judah." Judah continues to worship The One True God, the Lord, the I AM.

Amos was called by God from the Southern Kingdom of Judah to go prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Today's reading tells part of the situation and God's prophecy.

While they were creating all this wealth they were also a bunch of cheats and crooks. They could not wait for the opportunity to cheat people in business transactions by "fixing" their scales for weighing products. They had gotten so bad that they were even selling their kinsmen into slavery, sometimes for silver and sometimes for as little as a pair of sandals! So what does God tell Amos to say? "**Never will I forget a thing they have done!**" A few years later the Northern Kingdom of Israel was over-run by the Assyrians. The people were captured and scattered around the nations, never to be heard of again. Maybe this is a hint that we should listen to God and pay attention to what He says.

Let's do a little reflection. Picture a large box on a piece of paper. The box is your life. Picture yourself and family in the box. Now picture objects around you, your home, car, hobbies, sports, electronic, computer, smart phone, job, money - all those things most important to you. If we were to use a cross as a symbol for God, is the cross inside your box, or is it outside? Most of us are probably here in church today because we have brought the Lord into our lives to some degree, there among all the other objects in our lives.

How well is the Lord competing for our time and attention amidst all these other factors in our busy, busy, busy lives?

The Lord is more than a concept, an object, a thing way out there someplace. The Lord is a person. Because that person created us, because that person loves us wildly and recklessly, because that person came to live on earth with us, because that person wants to be a major part of our lives, where would that person like to be in this picture? The Lord wants to be at the center of our lives. Is He at the center of the picture of our lives?

How do we put God at the center of our lives? The Lord has given us advice on how to do that. Let's look at one way that has proved itself over the years. The idea is not new or strange. It is simply prayer.

Reflecting on The Lord's Prayer is a marvelous way to bring the Lord closer and closer to the center of our lives. A powerful way to pray the Lord's Prayer is to pray it very personally, from us to the Lord, from our hearts.

### ***Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.***

Good evening, Dad. It's been quite a day. I am really stressed out about my job, my family. Can I have a hug? Thanks for being the loving Dad that you are.

### ***Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

Yes, Lord, I've got my own agenda. But what is **Your** agenda for me this evening. What do You want me to do tonight and tomorrow to bring about Your kingdom in my little corner of life? I will really try to step up to Your expectations.

### ***Give us this day our daily bread.***

Thank You for the Bread of Life we receive at Communion. Thanks, Lord, for the regular bread we have today. Thank You for the food we have on our table and in our cupboards and in our refrigerator. What I really need from You is the wisdom on how to work with my family. Things just are not quite right. What am I to do? Where should I turn for help and guidance?

### ***Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.***

Lord, it is so hard to forgive. They hurt me so badly by what they said about me in front of so many of our friends. Did they know how badly it would hurt me? Did they care? Were they mad at me? Were they just having a bad day? Lord, You really want me to forgive them, don't You? OK, Lord, help me to have a chat with them and tell them I forgive them. It's not going to be easy. But I know You'll be there with me, won't You?

### ***And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.***

Lord, it's income tax time, and I am so tempted to cheat. They don't need all that tax money, they just waste it anyway, and I sure could use a little more here around the house. You know, I'm trying to raise my kids to be honest and here I am being a bad example for them. How can I preach honesty to them when I am cheating? I am even signing my name at the bottom of the form, my word and my pledge are not worth a lot if I am lying are they? Lord, still, it is so tempting. Help me, Lord, when I get to those lines on the form and I have to decide whether to use the real numbers or some made up ones. I need Your help, Lord. That's not going to be easy. **Amen.** Yes, I do believe!

Lord, thanks again for being my sounding board, my conscience, my support.

So, wouldn't it be great to try that sometime in the morning and again at bedtime. Sometimes you might just need to pause at a point that is really hitting you that day.

So, as we started, what will it be for us? Will it be God or mammon?