

OUR CONSCIENCE--WHEN WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT

(MK 6:14-29, Amos 7:7-15)

Sermon by the Rev. Corinne Hodges, Sun., July 12, 2009, SJOC

- I. Sitting down to say MP when phone rang, voice of friend upset with news of spouse's infidelity...second such call in last two months. Had made wrong, poor choice and now family left with dealing with consequences.
- II. Bad choices
 - A. Herod in Gospel—News of Jesus brings fear, flashback of something he did in past, unjustly killed JB, something possibly feels guilty for. All was fine when he did not think about it, but now this Jesus figure appears and reminds him of his sin and selfish, poor decision. He wishes he would just go away.
 - B. Amaziah the priest in charge of royal shrine of Bethel—Amos also a prophet like John who speaks the truth, delivers the bad news. Amos tries to call people back to high moral ground, but Amaziah, like Herod, doesn't want to hear it, doesn't want to be reminded how his and the people's poor decisions measure up, the times when they chose idolatry and injustice over God's way. Instead Amaziah wants to silence Amos, "O seer..." tells him to beat it, never return. He wants to continue living the life of wealth and prosperity and doesn't want the reminders of the little people who have been hurt or who are suffering. He doesn't want to think about social equality or concern himself for the disadvantaged.
- III. Human beings often find themselves in situations of temptation: ego and pride (Herod), power and influence (Amaziah), lust, newness, risk (spouse of friend). Name your temptation, but we all have them.
 - A. Find ourselves in circumstances where we can do one of two things: 1) the thing we want to do OR 2) the thing we ought to do. At times what we want to do can seem more exciting fun, personally beneficial, even at the cost of another, and besides, who will see us??? The other option is boring, less lucrative, means we have to keep working hard. It would be so much easier if we just did the wrong thing and got away with it, right? Short-sighted. Just like with Amaziah and Herod, our sins often catch up with us as well.
 - B. Perhaps it was easier in OT and Jesus' time—after all they had prophets, people to remind them and nag them about the rights and wrongs in life. Who are the prophets in our day? Do you know someone who knows you so well they can tell you the honest to God truth about what you are doing in your life? When you are going to make grave mistake/in error, will call you on it? If you have someone like this who does not always say what you want to hear, but need to

hear, consider yourself very fortunate. God has blessed you with a very wise, truthful and good friend...listen to them.

- C. If you don't have such a friend, stories from MK and Amos today show we cannot use this as excuse. Even when there were so-called proclaimed and God-endorsed prophets, people didn't listen. They turned their ear, like Amaziah, told them to go away, or like Herod, put them to death. After all, isn't this very much the same story of our Lord Jesus Christ??? The officials didn't like what he had to say, it threatened their sense of security, the good life they were leading...it was much easier to just make him disappear rather than change their ways. They told themselves that he was the problem, not them.

IV. Yet God has given us another gift, better than prophets to help guide us in life—conscience. Unique voice we have inside us, only human beings have it. Tells us when we have are considering doing something wrong.

- A. Voice that haunted Herod, that wouldn't go away; when he heard of Jesus, instantly he knew he wasn't Elijah. He was convinced he was John the Baptist risen. Could it be that he just couldn't shake the fact that he had killed an innocent man, one he believed to be holy, a man he kept locked up just to hear the truthful words he spoke? Perhaps Herod's conscience just wouldn't let him go
- B. It's time for us to step back and use our conscience. Our conscience keeps us honest, humble and compassionate. If we allow it, our conscience will tell us what decisions to make, it will steer us in the good right directions, and it will guide us to peaceful living. We will not be ashamed of our actions; we will not sacrifice others for ourselves. We will live faithful lives without regrets and cover-ups. For we know that we can never hide anything we do from God.
- C. Psalm 85 says, God speaks peace to his faithful people who turn their hearts to him. May we turn our hearts to God's prophetic voices in our lives, so that we may know and understand what things we ought to do and have the grace and power to faithfully accomplish them; through JC our Lord. Amen.