

MONDAY
25 JANUARY
Conversion of Paul
Jeremiah 1:4-10 or
Acts 9:1-22
Psalm 67
Acts 9:1-22 or
Galatians 1:11-16a
Matthew 19:27-end

TUESDAY
26 JANUARY
Hebrews 10:1-10
Psalm 40:1-4. 7-10
Mark 3:31-end

WEDNESDAY
27 JANUARY
Hebrews 10:11-18
Psalm 110:1-4
Mark 4:1-20

THURSDAY
28 JANUARY
Hebrews 10:19-25
Psalm 24:1-6
Mark 4:21-25

FRIDAY
29 JANUARY
Hebrews 10:32-end
Psalm 37:3-6. 40-end
Mark 4:26-34

SATURDAY
30 JANUARY
Hebrews
11:1-2. 8-19
Canticle:
Luke 1:69-73
Mark 4:35-end

REFLECTION

Wednesday's Gospel reading – the parable of the sower – tells us to be like “good soil”, providing a blueprint for reading the Gospel for the rest of the week and, indeed, for studying scripture at all times and in all contexts.



The sower features again in Friday's reading. This time the seed sprouts and grows until it's ripe for harvest. The farmer doesn't know how it happens that “the earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head”, nor does he need to know. All he needs to know is that his job is to create the optimum conditions for this to happen.

These are very earthy images, which remind us that it's important to be present, not only spiritually and emotionally, but also physically embodied, in order to absorb the word of God deep in our being and enable it to take root there.

As we read scripture this week let's practise not only understanding it intellectually, but really absorbing it into our physical selves, inhaling and ingesting it, allowing it to take root in the very fibre of our being.

PRAYER

Lord, in our study of scripture this week, teach us how to be present to your word, in mind, body and spirit.
 Thank you for the great example of St Paul, whose transformation gives us hope that no matter how helpless or hopeless we feel, we have within us the seeds of transformation to fulfil our God-given potential.
 We ask these things in Jesus' name.

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXX – AMOS – EARLIEST OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

Richard Greatrex continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.

The opening lines of Amos locate the prophet's activity in the peaceful, prosperous reign in Israel of Jeroboam II (788-747 BC), which identifies this as the earliest of the prophetic books. Certainly, Amos does contain an early collection of sayings, but it is possible that this was shaped into its final literary form during the post-exilic period from the sixth to the fourth centuries BC.

Amos describes himself as a farmer, herder and tender of fruit trees from the Judean village of Tekoa. In the first two chapters he describes God touring the region, judging the surrounding nations for their ethical misdemeanours. The focus then shifts onto Judah before climaxing with profound accusations targeting the self-indulgent elites of the Northern Kingdom.

Chapters three to six further indict Israel. The success of Jeroboam's reign hasn't brought about a harmonious, integrated nation; rather, gross inequalities abound, with powerful urban elites trampling upon the rural poor. The wealth gap is huge, debts are used to leverage small farmers out of their inherited lands, the ruling hierarchy has become over-confident, morally lax and self-reliant. They will be toppled unless they return to God's plans of justice and righteousness for everyone. The Assyrian army will be agent for God's judgement, crushing the spirit of their enemies through exile, the loss of the nation's homeland.

Such powerful preaching provokes the wrath of Amaziah, priest of the Northern Kingdom's Bethel sanctuary, who, in chapter seven, sends Amos packing back to Judah. There the prophet continues to castigate Israel's rulers for its oppression of poor people, warning them that such behaviour provokes God's decisive action against them. This will result not in reform but utter despair for everyone. While the book concludes with a final speech addressed to Judah, reinforcing God's judgement and holding out the hope of eventual restoration through repentance, Amos' message is clear: justice and righteousness are at the heart of God's plan for creation; whenever a nation or generation ignores them, they will be judged and chastised.

LIVE
the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
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AMOS

Third week of Epiphany

Monday 25 January
to Saturday 30 January
2021

WEEK