

2. July 2020

**“To respect the authority of God”**

*Amos 7,10-17*

*Amaziah the priest of Bethel then sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel as follows, 'Amos is plotting against you in the heart of the House of Israel; the country cannot tolerate his speeches. For this is what Amos says, "Jeroboam is going to die by the sword, and Israel will go into captivity far from its native land." 'To Amos himself Amaziah said, 'Go away, seer, take yourself off to Judah, earn your living there, and there you can prophesy! But never again will you prophesy at Bethel, for this is a royal sanctuary, a national temple.' I am not a prophet,' Amos replied to Amaziah, 'nor do I belong to a prophetic brotherhood. I am merely a herdsman and dresser of sycamore-figs. But Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel." So now listen to what Yahweh says: "You say: Do not prophesy against Israel, do not foretell doom on the House of Isaac!" Very well, this is what Yahweh says, "Your wife will become a prostitute in the streets, your sons and daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parcelled out by measuring line, and you yourself will die on polluted soil and Israel will go into captivity far from its own land!"'*

Prophets have to say what God tells them to say! They are the witnesses of God, they are his voice and those who remind the people and those in positions of responsibility of God's claim!

Today we hear about the conflict in which Amos is placed because he was called by God to speak to the people as a prophet! His words do not correspond to the wishes of the king and those who serve around the king! This concerns in this case especially the priest Amaziah of Bethel! On the contrary, the words of Amos are unbearable to them, and he is accused by King Jeroboam of sedition against him!

Unfortunately, we must often recognize the same thing: The truth, especially when it is unpleasant and does not correspond to one's own wishes and ideas, does not want to be heard! Instead of taking the proclamation of the truth as an occasion to draw the appropriate conclusions, to repent and seek unity with God, the bearer of God's truth is often persecuted and suspected!

Amos is no longer allowed to speak in Beth-El, and the reason for this is unmasking: it is a sanctuary of the king and a temple of the kingdom, says the priest Amaziah! That means that in the temple of the Lord no longer that which corresponds to the will of God is to be said, but that which flatters the ears of those in charge on earth!

The text shows us a very serious situation! The authority of God is to be undermined and quasi subordinated to political power! This is now a situation that we know spiritually since the fall of the angels! We must remember that it was the temptation of Satan to exercise power himself and thus replace the authority of God!

We can see the same thing when governments try to restrict the freedom to practice religion and thus abuse their power! This becomes quite obvious when a situation of persecution such as we know it in some states occurs! But even there, where the practice of religion is not forbidden, but one wants to restrict it to the private sphere, injustice is at work to limit the authority of God!

Besides these obvious forms of restriction there are also more indirect ones, in that the so-called "political correctness" does not want to tolerate clear moral attitudes in public and marks certain positions as outdated and unfashionable with the support of appropriate media. The consequence of this is that the prophetic corrective that wants to bring the view of God to the fore is increasingly silenced, and in this way the authority of God in this world is also undermined!

The great prophetic corrective for this world is the proclamation by the church! She is not only light of the world, but also salt of the earth (*cf Mt 5,13-14*)! The salt represents the truth, which must be proclaimed welcome or unwelcome (*cf 2 Tim 4,2*)! The church must never cease to bear witness to the truth, for in doing so it would silence God's claim!

Today's text shows us very clearly what is being threatened to Amaziah the priest who places himself in the way of the Prophet! What makes it more difficult is that as a priest, he should represent the position of God in a special way and not set the authority of the King against the Word of God!

We must not believe that preventing the exercise of God's authority would have any less consequences today, and we could reflect on the evils that would arise for people from such a situation!