



# Church of the Epiphany

## FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Epiphany 7 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • February 23, 2025



### Collect for Epiphany 7

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers, and because, through the weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Readings for the Epiphany 7

Genesis 45:3-11, 21-28

Psalm 37:8-17

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Luke 6:27-38

### The little that the righteous has Is better than the riches of the godly. AMEN

Good morning! The seasonal nature of our church calendar this year gives us a rare opportunity. Easter is so late in the year that we have a total of 8 Sundays in the season of Epiphany. Today is number 7, and as far as I can recall, I have never preached on today's lessons. That does not mean that they are unfamiliar. In fact, the lesson from Genesis from the story of Joseph is very familiar. Indeed, I can truthfully say, "I have been there, done that, and I have the T-Shirt to prove it!"

Some of you may remember the Alamogordo Music Theater performances of the show, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." AMT presented the show on at least two separate occasions, one a few years later than the other, and I was part of the cast in both. More importantly, my children were on stage with me on the first and grandchildren (including Patrick) on the second. It doesn't get any better than that. They had fun, too. I hope you have seen the show, whether with AMT or not.

The theater production does summarize much of the basic story of Joseph as related in the Book of Genesis. I suspect we are all familiar with it and remember the highlights. The story of Joseph was always a Sunday School favorite. Reading the whole narrative will give us much more, especially if we go back to include all about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the rest of the

extended family. That takes up more than half of the 50 chapters of the Book of Genesis. So it will take you a while once you get started. Today's reading is from chapter 45. In it, Joseph, now 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Pharaoh in Egypt, finally reveals to his 11 brothers just who he actually is. At this point, the narrative is centered on reconciliation, something that does happen occasionally, even in families which have been estranged for years. As a matter of fact, the whole family history from Genesis shows us that God's Chosen people came from a dysfunctional family, one in which manipulative behavior was all too common. They even tried to manipulate God. So not much has changed. Still, there is hope for us all, even thousands of years later. As the story unfolds, the reconciliation we read about today turned out to be a happy foundation for the "sojourn" in Egypt, in which the descendants of Jacob were fruitful and multiplied over some 430 years until the time of the Exodus, when Moses led them through the Red Sea and, some 40 years later, into the Promised Land.

Reading about reconciliation is a great way for us to begin preparing for the season of Lent. But making reconciliation actually happen can be challenging. There is lots of good advice in the verses we read from Psalm 37. Verse 8, the first verse we read this morning, says, "Refrain from wrath, and let go of anger; fret not yourself, lest you be moved to do evil." Would that more people heard and followed that advice, especially in families. There is hope in the next verse, "For evildoers shall be rooted out, but those who wait patiently for the LORD, they shall inherit the land." That strikes a nerve with me, for I have trouble waiting patiently for anything! The contrast between the ungodly and the righteous is further developed in the remaining verses of Psalm 37, with the assurance that, as to the ungodly, verse 13, "The LORD shall laugh at them in scorn, for he sees

that their day is coming."

But while the Psalm offered us some simplistic advice as to good guys and the bad guys, the text in the Gospel reading sets forth some serious challenges. Jesus was addressing a large crowd. It is described earlier, in verses 17 and 18, as, "a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and be healed of their diseases." So it is not just religious leaders and close followers. It is as broad-based an audience as anywhere in Scripture, Jews, Gentiles, everyone. What Jesus says is a radical as it gets, "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." He goes on about turning the other cheek and giving to those who beg, and then in verse 31, Jesus sets forth the Golden Rule, "And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them." Then he explains each point in a little more detail, showing how each is lived out day by day.

So in each of these readings we heard similar teaching, but note the use of different methods. In the story of Joseph, the story is the vehicle being used for the teaching. For example, although forgiveness is not specifically mentioned, you know it had to be a significant part of the overall process leading to reconciliation. The verses from the Psalm, on the other hand, are more like a general lecture to young people, setting forth the contrasts between good and evil and indirectly identifying the correct path. The Gospel is similar, but Jesus is focusing directly on those who hear Him and urging their individual response. He is not speaking generally, like the Psalmist. Even as large as the crowd was, it is like He was

speaking to each individual listener. In the Psalm, God is on the sidelines (remember verse 13, "The Lord shall laugh at them in scorn, for he sees that their day is coming"), but in the Gospel, Jesus is teaching each listener from center stage, "Judge not, and you will not be judged."

Finally, Paul is also teaching in today's NT reading from 1 Corinthians. He is addressing the difficult question of what the resurrection body will be like. It sounds like he does not really know for sure, but he is sure that it will be different. It will be as different, he states, as a seed is from the plant from which it grows. It will be a spiritual body and not a physical body. More importantly, he says in verse 38, "But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body." And finally, the reassurance in verse 49, "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."

Such is how the stories in our weekly lectionary readings help us see real people struggling with issues of faithfulness and obedience, as well as the consequences of disobedience. Through the teachings in Holy Scripture, we learn the particulars of how we are to act out our relationship with our heavenly Father, giving us at least a basic understanding of what we can expect from Him and what He expects from us. And it is energized by love, love for God and love for one another, revolving around the Cross of Christ.

So where is this taking us? Well, with preparation, prayer, and study, shepherded by faithful leadership, we as a faith community can grow closer to God and closer to one another. As that progresses, we will be better able to sense the presence of God in our midst and to discern His calling for us and for our ministry as a community. Ash Wednesday is less than two weeks away, and we will be invited to a Holy Lent. Let it be for us an opportunity to dive deeper into God's Word and learn more about our covenant role as followers of Jesus, the Christ of God. He is holding the door

open, even as we struggle to love our neighbors, give to those in need, and forgive as He forgives us. Let us not fear growing closer, word by word, page by page, story by story. May we find God's love for us all along the way.

AMEN.

Fr. Frank

### **Prayer List - 2/23/25**

Gran Pastor, Fresnillo, Mexico  
Senior Warden, Norma Rodriguez,  
Bishop Steven and Tricia

### **Those who need your healing care and strength:**

Walter Ford  
Luis and Kelle Senge  
Harry & Vivian Toepfer  
Ellie  
Rev. Shelby Moon  
Esther, Joel Fyock  
Lydia Tran  
Cheeta Mc Murray  
Rev. Elias Rosales Mendes

### **Those in the Armed Forces:**

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa  
Creed Napier, US Air Force,  
J.W. Grove, US Navy  
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-  
McChord  
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong  
Wyatt Green, US Navy  
Emma Skidmore, US Navy

### **We pray for our Epiphany family:**

Eddie and Karli Aguilar, Bill Sorensen  
Donya Conine; Trevor Conine; Wayne Jr.  
and the children; Carol Greb,  
Kelli; Harry Duval  
Debbie and Scooter Roof

## Lessons for Epiphany 7

February 23, 2025

Anglican Lectionary

year C

### Old Testament Reading

Genesis 45:3-11, 21-28

**3** And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. **4** So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. **5** And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. **6** For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. **7** And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. **8** So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. **9** Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. **10** You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. **11** There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' **21** The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. **22** To each and all of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes. **23** To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. **24** Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the

not quarrel on the way."**25** So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. **26** And they told him, "Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. **27** But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. **28** And Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

### Psalm 37:8-17

- 8 Refrain from wrath, and let go of anger; \*  
fret not yourself, lest you be moved to do evil.
- 9 For evildoers shall be rooted out, \*  
but those who wait patiently for the LORD,  
they shall inherit the land.
- 10 Yet a little while, and the ungodly shall be  
clean gone; \*  
you shall look for their place, and they shall  
not be there.
- 11 But the meek-spirited shall possess the land \*  
and shall be refreshed with an abundance  
of peace.
- 12 The ungodly plot against the just \*  
and gnash at them with their teeth.
- 13 The Lord shall laugh at them in scorn, \*  
for he sees that their day is coming.
- 14 The ungodly have drawn out the sword and  
have bent their bow \*  
to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay  
those who walk aright.
- 15 Their sword shall go through their own heart, \*  
and their bow shall be broken.
- 16 The little that the righteous has \*  
is better than great riches of the ungodly.

## Psalm 37:8-17 Continued

17 For the arms of the ungodly shall be broken, \*  
but the LORD upholds the righteous.

## New Testament Reading

### 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

**35** But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"

**36** You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. **37** And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. **38** But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. **39** For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. **40** There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.

**41** There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. **42** So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. **43** It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. **44** It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

**45** Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. **46** But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. **47** The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. **48** As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

**49** Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

## The Holy Gospel

### Luke 6:27-38

**27** "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. **29** To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. **30** Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. **31** And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. **32** "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **34** And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. **35** But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. **36** Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. **37** "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

