

Know your enemy. Know the adversary. Know who stands against you. Sports teams, Politicians, companies, chess players, all study their opponents, their strategies, their tactics.

In much more seriousness of all life, in all that matters. Know the enemy. Know what is truth. The devil's simple goal throughout the ages is to do 2 things: first, prevent sinners from hearing God's Word; from listening to it, keeping it, to silence it, even in this place; second, to have you listen to your heart, look there for answers. That's it. Not listen, keep God's Word; and you listen to you. Since the garden of Eden.

In the Old Testament, after King Solomon's death, 10 of the 12 tribes seceded from the union, formed the northern kingdom Israel; the southern Kingdom is Judah. It's a horrible, evil mess in the northern Kingdom, amid time of wealth, great prosperity; and people not listening to God's Word. God longs for His people, His chosen people to repent. Sends prophets, like Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and the last before their fall Amos. Instead of the people going to the temple in Jerusalem, they set up their own sanctuaries, their own ideas and rules for God, listened to their heart. Amos confronts them, a plum line, a simple tool of string and a weight on the end, hold it up, to see if the foundation is straight, right. Without a proper foundation of God's Word, it's all off. For example, deny the foundational point of infant baptism and the rest of your theology, Christology is off. Like the leaning town of Pisa, it's a church bell tower, and classrooms to catechize the people, next to it is a baptistry, a building for baptisms, does the same thing, leans, does not have a proper foundation. Even more, how necessary a right foundation when it comes to God's Word, His truth.

Amos is confronted by false teachers, lies about him and God, fake news conspiracies like he's trying to kill King Jeroboam. Well, the northern kingdom will not listen, it's wiped out, God brings destruction, yet still keeps His promise to preserve His chosen people and brings them a savior, a Christ that Amos and all the prophets and Psalms spoke of.

The Christ comes, tells them, you, **for from within, out of the heart, comes evil**- you get a list. The worst advice in the history of the world, yes, it's the worse ever, is to tell someone to follow their heart. To listen to their heart. That list there from Jesus is what you get. Following your heart hurts other, destroys families, marriages. Hurts the one following their heart and it brings only destruction. Those 2 things of the enemy, not hearing, listening, keeping God's Word and having you listen to you.

And all those things that flow out of your heart that Jesus says, all that list, you are guilty of all of them. You defile yourself. Repent. And from His crucifixion gives you **every spiritual blessing** His Word, Sacraments.

It's fascinating what names mean, their origin. It's a great conversation starter. What does your name, surname mean? Names derive from ancient words. Amos means "to be carried, born of God"; Elijah means, "the Lord is my God" We have several Amandas, means 'a beloved one.' Adalie, baptized today, related to a Hebrew verb means "God is my refuge." Names are important. Names tell us who we are, identify your family, who we belong to. And foremost, the Lord names you.

Look at all the: **In him, in Christ** phrases just in that Epistle reading. 12 verses, 9 times. **In Christ, in Him** is baptismal language, that St. Paul uses, joined to Him, where the Lord names you as His dear child. Through baptism you are joined **in** the death of Christ on the cross. The crucifixion is your present reality.

Your entire identity, is not how you feel, certainly not what your heart tells you. Your sin does not define you. Who you are, your entire identity flows from your baptism, seal of the Holy Spirit. Names you His. Adopted child. Chosen. Made holy, blameless, from the works of His cross **In Him**. He, seals you in baptismal waters; that the promise inheritance God spoke in heaven, your name before the foundation of the world, which He delivers you in baptism, is still good and always will be.

Amos will be martyred with most all the other prophets for doing nothing but speaking God's Word. It could not be silenced. Amos had nothing to fear, oh how the Lord loved him, loves you no less. Live your life trusting in your baptism. All that is yours.

The enemy cannot have you. Satan, his minions will try still to silence you, silence this place. St. Paul states, **the Lord gives you every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places**, that's here, where heaven and earth are joined as in no other way on earth. The voice of Jesus is still heard today from pulpit and lectern; He speaks, I forgive you. I baptize you. This is My Body. A heavenly place, because Jesus Himself, from the Altar, you see at the font, in this liturgy. He keeps His chosen who went before us now in the heavenly place, and here, in this heavenly place, you join with angels, archangels and all the company of heaven. As we sing now from Psalm 51; you certainly don't give your heart to Jesus or some other nonsense of sentimentality; but unto the Lord your prayer is, **create in me a clean heart O God, created new! and renew a right spirit within**. And your prayer is answered in this heavenly place.