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Amos was a normal, everyday working man. We hear about him in the first reading. He was an arborist. He ran a tree service. Amos' Tree Trimming, Inc. He lived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, just south of the border with the Northern Kingdom of Israel. There were a lot of professional prophets of his day, people who would prophesy for a fee. They even had a professional prophet association. It was the AFT & AOQ, Association of Fortune Tellers and Assorted Other Quacks. Amos wasn't part of that scene. He worked in orchards. But God chose him, Amos, to deliver His Word and truth to the people of Bethel just over the border in the Northern Kingdom. Amaziel, the local authority, told Amos to shut up and get out, but Amos said he had no choice. "The lion has roared, who will not fear? God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" That's *Amos 3:8*. So this ordinary man, Amos, became the vehicle of God's truth.

Four were fishermen. One was a hated tax collector. One a political zealot. There was nothing extraordinary about any of the twelve that Jesus sent out to preach, to heal and to expel demons. They were ordinary people, given instructions to conduct themselves like prophets. And the Word of God worked through them.

God works through everyday people, including us. The Word of God wants to work through every person here. We have to "proclaim the word, in season and out of season" as St. Paul writes in *2 Tim 4:2*. We have to proclaim the truth we experience within us whether it is a time others want to hear it, in season, or whether it is a time they would rather we just keep quiet, out of season. We need to bring the message, the experience, the very presence of Jesus Christ to the world. I said "we", not "I" but "we". Some will listen to you who will not listen to me. Perhaps it is people your age who will say, "I want to be happy with life just as he or she is happy." Perhaps it will be people who respect and love you, such as your parents and brothers and sisters. For the older folks here, perhaps it will be people who look to you for guidance, such as your own children or grandchildren. Many people will hear the message clearer when it comes from you rather than from me or any priest. So proclaim the message.

And yes, there will be people who will reject the message. You may indeed have to move on and proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ to others, just as the disciples were told to move on if they are rejected. But don't stop praying for them. And be patient. Joy, happiness and the Presence of the Lord are contagious. Sometimes, though, it takes time for people to allow the Cure for life's ills to heal them.

I want you to do something now, close your eyes and picture yourself gazing up into the sky. Then in the distance above you there is a huge bird soaring. At first you think it must be a plane or a helicopter, but you don't hear a motor, what you hear is the flapping of wings and the calling of an eagle. The eagle starts circling down, coming closer and closer to you. You are not frightened, just intrigued. Finally, it lights right next to you. It's huge. Then it turns its head to you, holds out a wing, and touches its back. It's inviting you to climb onto its back. It wants to take you for a ride. So you

do. And you soar with that eagle. The earth looks so beautiful from its back. The heavens seem so close. It is all rather glorious.

But it is not enough for you to be soaring on the eagles back. The eagle sets down in the middle of your friends, your neighborhood, your workplace, your family. And the eagle looks at you and at them. You realize it is telling you to invite them to climb up onto its back and soar with you. And so we hold out our hands for others to join us. That is what today's readings tell us to do. We are to call out to others to join us on the amazing journey that is the Christian life. We are to tell them, proclaim to them, that the eagle is Jesus Christ. And the wonderful journey with Him, on his back, is the Christian Life.

We climb onto the Eagle. We hold out our hands. And we invite others to come with us and soar.

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Il Fr Desiano

We have all become very sensitive about our surroundings, especially fearing to go someplace strange or different. Two years ago we might enter a hotel room with a smile, wondering how big the TV screen might be; now we enter wondering if they have sanitized the room enough or if we will end up bringing a deadly virus to someone else because someone didn't clean enough.

All of this reminds me of an ironic movie called "The Accidental Tourist," in which the protagonist, a travel editor, tries to make every hotel room he stays in look exactly the same. It's as if he never left home. He always wants those things that make him feel self-assured surrounding him in the room.

Jesus is not into accidental tourism in the Gospel today; Jesus is into mission. Rather than having his apostles hang out and feel comfortable, Jesus is sending them out to do the very things that he himself has done. It's as if a child went to swimming lessons and now it's time to swim without the teacher's support. "You have seen my ministry; now do it yourself." Amos wanted to stay home, as the first reading shows, but God gave him a mission bigger than his flock and his sycamore trees.

Jesus knows this will not be easy because we are most comfortable staying in our own zone. He advises them to travel very lightly—not to bring extra things or extra money. He wants them to go out in great simplicity so that they will be forced to deal with others—to meet them, to engage with them, to depend on them for food and beddings, and to proclaim the Kingdom of God to them.

In other words, Jesus sends them out in great simplicity and he gives them a very simple message: they were to preach repentance, that is, a new way of seeing things because God was active in their lives. Their deeds were to bring healing and victory over the very forces that we think hold us back: cast out demons and anoint the sick to cure them. The demons are the illnesses of our spirits which distort and limit them; our spirits need healing even more than our bodies.

He also teaches them not to worry about failure. Some people will hear their voices and be unmoved; but our mission is to speak God's message, to do the deeds that show God's presence, and trust that those who are ready will be able to see this. The ones who hear you will become part of a community of people who have been called and chosen to experience God in such a way that he want to spread that experience to others.

As believers we may look stranger and stranger to people around us. This may make us want to crawl in a shell and play safe. But Jesus does not call us to crawl into shells. He calls us to be apostles and ambassadors of his healing and grace. He knows we are cautious. "Trust me," he says. "I am always with you."

Perhaps each one of us can think of someone who needs a word of healing or consolation. After what we've been through, that might include just about everyone! But, for now, just think of one person and realize that God is sending you to that

troubled heart. Start with that hurt, focus on God's healing presence, and let the Kingdom shine through you.

Now if we all did that, what might the impact be?