



15<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Biv  
Excerpts From Amos 7, Ephesians 1 and Mark 6

## Tunnel 29

It is the Father's plan to bring everything together under Christ. Jesus calls us today to get on board with this epic project.  
Fr David King – 11<sup>th</sup> July 2021

*Please read the Gospel before reading this (Mark 6.7-13)*

### 1. Joachim

One of the highlights of my time in lockdown was actually listening to this amazing podcast. The podcast was called 'Tunnel 29' and it was about something that happened in Berlin in the 1960's. It was an astonishing story, a true story, and I was totally gripped from start to finish and the podcast was so successful that it's coming out as a book in August.

As I'm sure you know, after World War II, the city of Berlin was divided with the Soviets taking control of the Eastern part of the city, and the Western Allied Forces taking control of the West. But over the next decade or so, the Communist East fell rapidly into economic disarray and complete chaos, whilst the Western part of the city flourished, and soon loads of people were leaving the East and flocking to the West for a better life, so in August of 1961 the Soviets put up a wall to stop people leaving; the Berlin Wall.

- But, incredibly bizarrely (and I had no idea it happened like this) the wall went up virtually overnight. People awoke on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1961 to find themselves cut off from brothers, sisters, friends and family that previously had just lived down the road. Even some husbands and wives were separated from each other, and children from parents.
- In October of 1961, just a couple of months after the Wall went up, two Italians came to visit a guy called Joachim, who was a 22-year-old Engineering student in West Berlin. They were desperate to get some friends out of East Berlin, and they had come to see if Joachim would help them dig a tunnel under the wall, to help their friends escape.
- Joachim agreed and what followed was an epic escape story. I can't possibly tell you the whole story here, but suffice it to say it was very exciting. On their second attempt, when they had spent months trying to dig this tunnel, they hit water pipes and realised their only hope was to dig up into the basement of a cottage that was essentially right on the border. It was hugely dangerous, there were Stasi soldiers and spies everywhere and no one knew if this cottage was going to have people in it or not.
- On the evening of the attempted rescue, those wanting to escape, about 29 of them at this point, gathered in various pubs around the area to wait for the signal. They couldn't bring anything with them of course, that would arouse suspicion, so these people just left everything in their houses and came just in the clothes they were standing up in. It was so tense for everyone, but eventually, against all the odds, the plan succeeded and 29 people made it through the tunnel, caked in mud, with tears and torn clothes but with this a new life ahead of them. The story was incredible, but I say all this because it serves to show the lengths that we human beings will go to, to unite something that has been divided. There are some things that simply belong together; families, lovers, friends, and we clearly have an inbuilt sense that we must bring this unity about.

## 2. Paul

- If St Paul was here today I'm sure he would tell us that this is exactly what is on God's heart too. This is what he's all about too! It is an epic passage that we get from Ephesians today, Paul had lived there in Ephesus, which was a huge city and a melting pot of Greek and Roman culture and worship. But then he left, and after a while he wrote them this letter to remind them of what the Gospel message was, and how it should impact on their lives. It's a brilliant letter.
- And in this section today, which is from chapter one, Paul explains that, astonishingly, God has made known to us his ultimate purpose, and that is to unify all things in heaven and on earth under the Messiah. Heaven and earth had been ripped apart don't forget (you can read all about that in Genesis 3). But this is the plan of God, Paul says, to unite heaven and earth under Jesus!
- Wow, ok! Now that makes some sense, but it makes even *more* sense in the light of the Gospel reading. Jesus' claim was that this plan was reaching its climax in him – God had been paving the way for this to happen and now it *was* happening *in him*. And in the Gospel he is sending out the disciples to make it *known* that this was happening, and to call people to get on board.
- You see that's what the word 'repentance' really means. The apostles weren't just calling people to turn away from their own personal sins (although that was part of it for sure), but really it was a call for people to turn away from the other agendas and projects that they had bought into, be they political or economical or spiritual, and to get on board with what *God* was doing in and through Jesus. That's what was most important! 'God is enacting the final stage of his plan in Jesus', this was the disciple's message, 'come and be a part of it!' Don't get sucked into useless schemes.

## 3. Amos

- And I hope you can see how it's so easy to apply all of this to us. These scriptures are so relevant to us. They remind us of the good news...that God's plan is to unite heaven and earth in Jesus the Messiah, gathering his lost children back into his arms. This he has done, and is doing, in Jesus. But, also, crucially, they call us to repentance too. Last week, in all the facts and figures about what's happening in the church, we saw that the message of Jesus is clearly struggling to cut through. People are turning to all kinds of other agendas...
- Some people have put their store in capitalism. Some have put their trust in progress. Some have turned to politics and various populist strands of it. Some have embraced liberalism as being the saviour of modern society. Some promote western democracy as the answer to everything. Some have embraced a consumer culture, finding salvation in having everything we want.
- Now, I'm not saying there's anything intrinsically evil about any of these things per se (although interestingly they all have fallen short of providing the utopia they have promised), but these things are competing for our minds, our hearts and our souls. They often demand our allegiance, our worship, our total commitment. And it's then that things begin to get a bit murky. This is what the word repent means. It is a call not to trust in these things, but rather to get on board with what God is doing in and through Jesus, establishing his kingdom and uniting heaven and earth in the process. And it's then that we form a healthy relationship with these other things, using them when they can be useful to us and this kingdom project, but not using them when really they are using us.

*Father, thank you for uniting heaven and earth in Jesus. I give you myself, for you to use me as you will, for this cause.*