



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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July 22, 2012

Pentecost 8

Sermon Text: [Amos 7:10-17](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Amos 7:10-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 78](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 6:7-13](#)

“Hear The Word of The Lord”

The Message of a faithful prophet

The Defense of a faithful prophet

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Some things in life are easy to measure and some things aren't. Businesses have a certain way to measure. They measure their sales. They measure their profits, their gross profit, their net profit. If the profit is increasing, we'd say the business is succeeding. That's pretty straightforward. It's so straightforward and so easy to measure and so many are so used to doing it that sometimes we want to take that model and apply it to God's kingdom - if the church is succeeding, it's numbers are growing. I'm not so certain if that's such a reliable indication of success in God's kingdom.

Jesus had crowds, right? Over 5,000 men at one time, not counting the women and children that were there just to hear him talk, where there wasn't a grocery store around. They were out in the middle of nowhere. But at the end, where were the crowds? After he had fed the 5,000, he told them something that was hard for them to take. It was a message they didn't like. "I'm the bread of life. I have come down from heaven." "No you haven't. You came from Nazareth. We know who you are." The crowd started dissipating because they didn't like the message. "Do some miracles. Do some tricks. Feed us again. That stuff is great. But claiming you're the bread from heaven? You're nuts." They drifted away.

Those closest to him, those he had instructed the most all ran away the night he was betrayed. What an abject failure Jesus is if you use a business model to measure the work of God's kingdom, right? Complete and abject failure. We can get confused and try to measure things the wrong way.

I think in a sense that's what we see going on in that section of Amos that I read to you today. There's Amos. There's Amaziah. There's Israel. There's Judah. There's Bethel. There are all these different things that are being talked about. I think what we see is that Amaziah is a guy that is trying to use a business model. "Give the people what they want. Meet their felt needs. Give them a message they like or else they aren't going to listen to you and you won't succeed." Amos was giving the people what they needed, not what they wanted. He was giving the people what God had told him to proclaim to them.

Amos is known as the angry prophet. His whole book, read his book, it's not terribly long, but read the book, he's angry the whole time. He used words of judgment. He used words of condemning their social injustice, how the rich were abusing the poor, and how even though the boundaries of Israel were expanding and the economy was great, he was saying "You people are far from God." God had promised through other prophets that things would get better. They got better and the people didn't say "Thank you, Lord." They patted themselves on the back and they took advantage of everything. God was sick of it, so he sent Amos to give them a very angry message. That angry message was not well received.

That's why Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, says to Amos, "Go home. Get out. We don't want your stuff here. We don't want the product you are peddling. Go home you seer and make your money there. Make your bread there. This is the king's temple." There is so much messed up in what Amaziah just said that I don't know if you can even pick it all out.

First of all, he considered Amos a guy just like him that was just making a living by being a prophet by claiming to speak for God. You kind of get the feeling that Amaziah never really had any visions from God and he just did what was a felt need of the people, which was to hear "God loves you. Everything is going great. Don't worry about repenting of your sins because God must love you because everything is going well." He would have fit in great today in much of our country's prosperity theology... "if you name it and you claim it, God will give it to you, and if he gives it to you, that's the evidence that God loves you. Don't look at the objective Word which says 'do this, don't do that.' Just trust that if you are being blessed as you see it in your eyes, that means God is happy with you. Don't listen to any of these negative Nellys that tell you 'That's a sin and that's a sin,' because that's just a downer. That would turn people off and they won't listen, so don't proclaim the Law."

Another thing...did you notice that Amaziah is the priest of Bethel? Do you know what Bethel is? Do you know the difference between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah? They split into two kingdoms. Judah had godly kings and godless kings. Israel, the Northern Ten Tribes, had all miserable kings. The first one set up temples in Bethel and in another place at the north end and the south end of the kingdom so the people would no longer go to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. Do you remember what he set up in those temples? He put golden calves up there and said "This is the god who brought you out of Egypt." So Amaziah is a prophet that serves a golden calf. Notice he doesn't even say he serves a golden calf. He says he serves the king. "This is the king's temple." Not the Heavenly King, he's thinking Jeroboam II, the king that he was serving about 750 B.C.

He doesn't see himself as a servant of the most high God. He says he sees himself as a servant of the king and his job is to keep the king happy. The king is not happy if Amos is saying things like he said right before what I read to you. He said "The sword will destroy the house of Jeroboam." Jeroboam's son was assassinated. It came true, but it's not a real popular message, is it? You don't want to hear that because you are

so wicked, you're children are going to be run through with a sword. If you hear that message, you are going to want to get rid of that prophet and find a prophet that says something that's a little more pleasing to your ears. So that is what Amaziah is trying to do.

Notice Amos' defense. He says, "I'm not a seer that's in this for the money. I didn't choose this. I was tending some flocks..." It literally sounds like some kind of livestock. It doesn't specify it. He says he was dressing sycamore fig trees. They still do that today. They do something to the figs. I don't raise figs. I don't know what they do, but they do something to make them ripen faster. He was the guy that was up there hitting each individual fig in a tree. It doesn't sound like a really great job. He dealt with smelly animals and he had to climb a tree and do something to each individual fig on the tree. He didn't aspire to be a prophet, but God came to him while he was doing those things. While he was carrying out that vocation that God had given him, God came to him and said "Go to Israel."

Amos was from Judah. He was from just outside of Bethlehem and Jerusalem...eleven miles away from Jerusalem. God said "Go to my Northern Kingdom. My Northern Kingdom is irritating me and I have a message you have to speak to them." Amos says, "I'm not a prophet. I'm not in this for the money. I'm doing this because this is what God has called me to do. I believe in my Lord, and this is what he has told me to do to serve my Lord, so this is what I'm doing." To Amos, It's not about the money. It's not about serving people. It's about serving God. Amaziah is about serving the king and being secure.

Think of how often you and I are tempted to make that same mistake today. "I can't say to one of my friends or relatives that what they are doing is wrong before God because they will get mad at me and won't listen to me anymore. I can't proclaim God's Law faithfully and say that is sin because they won't listen. So instead I'll just ignore it or dance around and not talk about it. I want to meet the felt need of those people, not serve God faithfully." You and I are always tempted to do that, aren't we?

When we do it, we are no different than the priest of Bethel that serves a golden calf. Our golden calf has become our relationships. It has become our feelings and the feelings of those around us. Our God is no longer our God then because that's not who we are serving.

I don't think Amos enjoying being the angry prophet, but that's what God called him to be. So he did it. He spoke the Word faithfully. It didn't make him friends. He lived in a foreign land. He didn't even get to stay by his relatives. He had to go hang out at a temple that worshiped something he knew was not God and proclaim the message of God to people that didn't want to hear the message of God because they didn't like it. I don't like hearing Law. I don't like hearing my sin. But I need to, and at times I need faithful people that are willing to point it out to me. You probably don't like hearing it

either, but you need faithful people to point it out to you. Your friends and neighbors probably don't like to hear it either, but they need you to be faithful and proclaim it to them.

Your vocation that God has given you might not be full-time ministry of the Gospel, but in his Word, God has called each individual Christian to teach and admonish one another. All those "one another" passages in the New Testament are not addressed to just full-time Gospel ministers. They are addressed to Christians. God has given you that vocation as well. Even if it isn't a full-time Gospel ministry, he has given you the vocation of Christian who admonishes and is concerned about one another and proclaims the message that needs to be spoken.

Your message might not be as harsh as Amos' was. How would you like to be Amaziah and have Amos look you in the eye and say "Your wife is going to be a prostitute in the city because you are going to be dead and your children are going to be run through and there is going to be no one to support her. The only way she is going to be able to support herself is by being a prostitute." That's the message God gave Amos to say.

God gave Amos the message to say that quoted exactly the words of Amaziah. "Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land." That was the last two lines of what Amaziah had said Amos was saying, and he quoted again and said "This certainly is a message from the Lord." They did... their prosperity all disappeared because the Assyrians came and conquered them and took them away. It's not a fun message to speak at times, but God has called us to speak it, and to speak it faithfully.

You and I have failed to speak that message and speak it faithfully. You and I have sinned against our God and made all the excuses in the book about it. Each of us has done it. That also is a sin against our God. That's why on days like this, it's such a wonderful blessing for us to come to the Lord's altar and receive his very body and blood that was given and shed, that was poured out for us to take away all our sins, including these sins of the times we fail our God. In that body and blood, we find forgiveness, not in our feelings, not in our service, not in our efforts. We find forgiveness in what Christ has done for us.

If you have spoken God's Word faithfully, when you come and you receive the body and blood of Christ today, it might well be that you are receiving it for the sin of smugness - "I'm better than those people that don't." No matter what we do, whether we don't do what God has called us to do, or whether we do what God has called us to do, Satan is always going to want to tempt us to take our eyes off God and put our eyes on ourselves as our reason for doing things. If he can't stop me from serving God faithfully, then he is going to try to twist that and turn it around to "I'm better than you are because I do this and you don't." There isn't any of us that is better than anyone else. Our service doesn't make God love us more. God loves us because God is love. God is love and he lived and died in our place and took away all of our sins.

So with a humble heart, acknowledge where we have failed. Then with a joyful heart, depart in peace knowing that your sins are forgiven and seek to serve the Lord even more faithfully, not because you have to, but because this is one of the things God has called you to do. When you are attacked for doing what the Lord has called you to do, your defense is “Hear the Word of the Lord. It’s not my Word. It’s his Word. This is what he said. This is what he wants you to know.” But then always follow it up with “This is the Word of the Lord that takes away your sins. Christ lived in your place. Christ died in your place. Christ rose again.” Amen.