

## 08-17-2025 Words of Worship

### Welcome –

- Lilly Voth will be bringing us special worship music right after the Time for Children. Also, we won't be hearing the Colossians passage this morning, just the section from Amos.

### Announcements or Opportunities --

### Call to Worship --

**Prayer** – Spirit of God, always present with us, we welcome you into our midst as we worship. Move among us, nudge us to listen with new ears, to see with new eyes, to understand your presence ever more fully so that we can follow ever more faithfully. Amen.

### Morning Prayer –

Well, God, here we are at the beginning of another school year – the summers always go so fast. Still, we thank you for the season of summer, for the break in our schedules and routines and now, for the opportunity to return to school, to learning academically, socially, spiritually, in all the ways that you've created us to learn. Give us a thirst for your gift of curiosity, to learn and grow and become who you've gifted each of us to be, whether children or grown-ups.

We pray for all students, teachers, faculty and staff, everyone involved in the learning process. May this school year be a rich time of learning and growth. May you be a strong, guiding presence in the learning.

We pray for those who don't have what they need to go to school or who may not even have a school to attend. O God, enrich these dear children with your love, your spirit of learning and may you be their teacher and their guide.

We thank you, God, for our elders, for those upon whose shoulders we stand – in our faith and in our lives. May we never take our elders for granted and may we never stop learning from them. Be with each of them, let them know their beloved-ness, that they are also your children and those through whom you've been a light and an inspiration to the rest of us.

We thank you, God, for the gift of newness and new life. We're especially grateful this morning for the safe and happy arrival of Clara Ruth, born to Ryan and Miriam and making Myron and Ruth grandparents. Be with them all as they adjust, learn to know one another and find a routine with this new little girl.

We thank you for Steve and Sandy. We ask for your continued blessings and presence with them as they enter this new time of services from hospice. May they feel certain of your love and presence with them each moment. We lift them to you and ask for your hand of tender mercy on them – together, as a couple and each with their own needs, individually.

Be with others we know and love who may be ill, undergoing tests or treatments. We know that we all fight our own battles – some of them visible and easy to describe, some more mysterious and difficult to cope with. You are our ultimate comfort and peace. Let us find ourselves in you. Amen.

### Offering --

## Offering Prayer - #746 – Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving

### Scripture --

### Sermon --

**2025-08-17 Amos 7 (the plumb line) “This is what the Lord God showed me”**

**Pastor Lois Harder**

After Isaiah 40:4-5, Amos 5:24 was the scripture passage quoted most often by Martin Luther King, Jr. Isaiah first, “Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill made low; the uneven ground shall become level and the rough places plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”, and a close second, Amos “But let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Like the prophets before him, quoting the prophets before him.

Amos was from the southern kingdom of Judah in which the capital was Jerusalem but he was prophesying to the temple priest Amaziah and the king Jeroboam of the northern kingdom, Israel whose capital was Samaria. It hadn’t been all that long since the two kingdoms had been one. In fact, Jeroboam I had been the ringleader of the revolution in which the original twelve tribes had split – 10 of them seceding from “the house of David” to form the kingdom of Israel while the other two remained in Judah. Over those roughly 200 years the two kingdoms were sometimes allies, but more often, at odds with one another, vying for power and loyalty from their citizens.

Now, Amos was from little Tekoa, just outside of Jerusalem. So, it wasn’t far for him to cross over from Judah into Israel. But the distance was the least of his concerns. He wasn’t particularly welcome in the Kingdom of Israel; his message was harsh and he hardly ever had words of comfort or hope. Furthermore, he was talking directly to the temple priest Amaziah who had been appointed by the king, and to the king, so Amos’ harsh words were directed at the two leaders as well as the people of Israel.

Amos was not speaking on behalf of an earthly king, but rather, on behalf of God. “This is what the Lord God showed me.” he says. And according to Amos, the Lord God wasn’t showing him anything very flattering about Israel. It certainly wasn’t encouraging stock market numbers or inflated Labor Statistics. If we back up just a few verses before where Brendon started reading, at the beginning of chapter 7, we learn that what God was showing Amos first was a locust plague. It says, “God was forming locusts at the time they began to sprout. It was the latter growth, after the king’s mowing. When they had finished eating the grass of the land, Amos said, “O Lord God, forgive, I beg you! How can Jacob stand? (Jacob is another name for Israel.) He is so small!” The Lord relented concerning this: “It shall not be,” said the Lord.” Verse 4 This is what the Lord God showed me: the Lord God was calling for a shower of fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. Then I said, “O Lord God, cease, I beg you! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!” The Lord relented concerning this: “This also shall not be,” said the Lord God.’

And then we come to today’s verses about God showing Amos the plumb line. Now the plumb line is different than a plague of locusts or a shower of fire. Those are both images of near complete destruction and Amos has prophesied 6 chapters of similar kinds of destructive images already. So when we come to the plumb line here, in chapter 7, God is changing the tune a bit and using different language and a different image. God was referring to the people of Israel as a wall. And as God set the plumb line amidst the people, it showed that the people themselves were “out of plumb”. They were out of alignment, not

living within the faithful covenant with God to which they had been called and had agreed. And THIS was why God was so upset with them.

But King Jeroboam II was intoxicated by some years of his kingdom's productivity and success. The people's loyalty to him and the power he had established was driving him. He wanted prophets who only spoke favorable words about him and his "priest" Amaziah was appointed specifically to keep prophets like Amos at bay and quiet. But Amos understood that Jeroboam was promoting and capitalizing on a sense of false religious superiority and exceptionalism. Jeroboam and his people were certain that only they had been chosen by God to be brought out of enslavement in Egypt, into the land of Canaan and to prosper – these were all sure signs of God's favor and approval, which clearly (in their minds) was not available to the people of little Judah or anyone else. They alone were the recipients of the richness of God's blessings.

And so, Amaziah told Amos to get out, to flee back to Judah and "earn his bread" there and prophesy there and never again return to Bethel, to the king's sanctuary, the temple of the northern kingdom. Amos, not to be deterred objected to even being called a prophet and for sure not a "professional" prophet who "earned his bread" by prophesying. "I am no prophet", he said, "not even a prophet's son! I earn my living in agri-business and I don't answer to any king. I respond to the call of the Lord and it was the Lord who took me from my flocks and told me to "Go to Israel and prophesy."

And that's what I've done. You, Amaziah, and the people of Israel were meant to be a strong, straight wall for God. But you are all leaning, "out of plumb", threatening to fall under the weight of your own hubris and thirst for power, more concerned about the safety of your own position than in doing the will of God. And so, Amos continues in verse 17, all that you hold dear will be lost, you'll begin to feel the weight of not honoring the covenant.

The covenant isn't about "us" and "you" or "us" and "them". The covenant was made so that all of us who enter into it can show the rest of the nations how this God of covenant loves and leads and guides and includes and welcomes and longs for all people to be "in plumb", "in line" with God, with God's creation, with one another.

No one who claims to worship God in wisdom and in truth will try to "lord it over" anyone else. God's ways are the ways that will be the most surprising and unexpected, like sending a prophet from a tiny little kingdom made up of just two tribes, or, sending a prophet from Nazareth – "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" they asked. Or, the one who stops to help might be one of the hated Samaritans. Or, the people whose wisdom we most need might be the very ones we've tried to exterminate or enslave.

Look for God's prophets where you least expect to find them. Where they most disrupt the status quo and they bring to light the injustice that's baked into the system, down so deep and dark that it's hard to even see. Look for God's prophets where they bring your attention to the ugly, painful things that you'd much rather look away from. Look for God's prophets among people who are different than you, people who scare you or who you've been told you can't trust. The more we can look and see God where we didn't expect God to be, the more "in plumb" we'll be in the construction of God's kingdom.

Resources:

*Amos & Hosea Boundaries, Tough Love, Amazing Grace* Resource Book from the Kerygma Program by George W. Ramsey

*Hosea and Amos*, Believers Church Bible Commentary

*Texts for Preaching; A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV – Year C*

*Feasting on the Word*, Year C, Volume 3

**Song of Response #791 Let Justice Flow Down**

**Song of Sending #209 We Dream of a Turning**

**Benediction** – Some of you had the opportunity to meet Cliff Loesch, retired Quaker pastor, on Friday at the Sr. Coffee. As you may know, some Quakers have what they call “programmed” meetings – an ordered, sequence of worship, much like ours. But some worship in “un-programmed silence and when someone feels The Spirit urge them to speak, they say what The Spirit has given them to say, but otherwise, they sit together in meditative quiet.

I found a little story about the Quakers that I’ll use as our benediction:

The story goes that when a certain stranger attended his first un-programmed Friends Meeting, the long silence puzzled him. He turned to the person next to him, inquiring, “When does the service begin?” The answer came, “When the meeting ends.” Go out from here, ready to serve in the name of Christ.