

Sermon for The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Date: July 11, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Amos 7:7–15

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 1:3–14

Gospel Reading: Mark 6:14–29

Sermon Text: Amos 7:7–15

Sermon Title: What Does God Say

Introit: Psalm 143:1–2, 8a; antiphon: v. 11

Hymns:

- LSB 589 – Speak Lord Your Servant Listens
- LSB 583 – God has Spoken by His Prophets
- LSB 545 – Word of God, Down to Earth
- LSB 630 – Now, My Tongue, the Mystery Telling
- LSB 629 – What is This Bread
- LSB 728 – How Firm a Foundation

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184



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Songs:

- Thy Word – Amy Grant
- The Word – Sara Groves
- The Word is Alive – Casting Crowns
- Word of God Speak – Mercy Me
- The Blessing

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



Text: Amos 7:7–15

This is what [the Lord God] showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the LORD said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said,

“Behold, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them;
the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

Then Amaziah {*am-az-EYE-ah*} the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said,

“Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.”

And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

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Grace, peace and mercy in Jesus' name. Amen.

There is an enemy that is out to get you. It's that old evil foe, prowling around like a lion looking to devour you. That is an enemy we must know. We cannot pretend he doesn't exist. We cannot pretend he will just go away. We should study him, only to better understand his aims and goals. What is his agenda? What are his strategies, his tactics?

The devil wants despair and wickedness. The more of that, the happier he is, but the center of what he's all about is unbelief. He wants to keep unbelievers in unbelief, dead in their sins. He wants to entice believers away from their Lord and Savior, away from faith to unbelief. The devil wants us to see unbelief which breeds death, physical and eternal.

Fortunately we have help against this ancient enemy of epochs past. We have one Who is not just with us, but within us. It is the Holy Spirit Who has made our body His temple.¹ What does the Holy Spirit want? The Holy Spirit wants to create and sustain faith and belief. The Holy Spirit wants to strengthen the bonds between you and your Savior to help you become a stronger, more mature Christian, to grow in Christ.

How does the Holy Spirit do that? By the Means of Grace. The Word of God and the Sacraments Jesus has given to us. Through the Law of God, He leads sinners to repentance. Through the promises of God fulfilled in Jesus, He leads sinners to repentance and reconciliation with God. He creates and sustains faith and gives joy in the Jesus.

That being true, the devil's goal is to keep you away from those things. He wants to keep you from hearing, really listening, and taking seriously what God has to say. He wants you to forget your Baptism. He wants you away from the Lord's Supper, or to come to it with unrepentant hearts. At his core, the devil's agenda is to prevent you from hearing the life-giving Word of God, and to prevent you from receiving the life-giving Word made flesh, your Maker and Redeemer.

Satan's tactics are sly. One approach is to fill your ears with many false voices in an effort to drown out the voice of God. Throughout the history of Israel, we read of false prophets; of counterfeit voices. The false prophets

1 1 Corinthians 6:19

would tell sinners what they wanted to hear,² and as a result, they were popular. Look at our country today. Most of us sitting hear can probably pick out God's clarion voice through the din of the world's lies. In that crowd of voices it is a competitive environment. Which voice are you going to listen to?

Of course drowning out the Truth is not as good as silencing the Truth, by silencing those who speak it. The prophet Isaiah was sawn in half. The apostle Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified upside down. Almost all of the prophets and apostles were executed in horrible ways. Such hate. Such lies. Such ruthlessness.

Still God's Word remains. By the power of the Holy Spirit the writings of the prophets and apostles are preserved, and we can hear, read, and inwardly digest them to this very day.

In our Old Testament reading God called Amos and sent him to proclaim the Truth. Amos was in the town of Bethel (Hebrew for the House of God). Amos was called by God to proclaim what God had to say. When you read through the prophet Amos you hear a consistent phrase over and over "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel." God's Word will remain. Come what may.

At the time of Amos there was a priest, s pastor, in Bethel whose name was Amaziah who did not want God's true Word proclaimed, like so many pastors in churches across our land today. Amaziah went to the king, the government, to get the prophet Amos silenced.

Look at how Amaziah spun the truth. Amos was pointing out sin for the purpose of calling sinners to repentance and reconciliation with God. Amaziah spun it as a conspiracy against the government.

"Amos has conspired against you O King."³

This pastor had fallen captive to Satan's lies and he was now repeating them. Amaziah painted Amos as a political problem that needed to be purged. Sound familiar? You can hear that same message on your Television in this evening's news.

Through His faithful pastors the true God speaks to sinners to give them life. The opponents would reduced that Word of God to worldly politics.

2 2 Timothy 4:3

3 Amos 7:10

Drown it out. Hid it in the din of noise. Noise which can causes us to stray either way off that narrow road about which Jesus taught.⁴ Coming just off of the 4th of July celebration, are we not tempted to put the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States, at the same level as Sacred Holy Scripture. Satan is always whispering.

Amaziah discounted what Amos was proclaiming as only words from Amos, invented by Amos, to serve a political agenda. Our old evil foe tries to prevent you from hearing the life-giving Word of God. He will lead you to to discount it, trivialize it, ignore it, dismiss it as simple human speech and people's opinion. Amaziah reveals his real agenda when he says, "never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary..."⁵ Meaning speaking judgment against sins was to speak against the government.

The kingdom of darkness does not want sinners to hear the true Word of God. It seeks to silence or remove those who speak that Truth. It leads people to dismiss the Word of God as only self-serving religious talk. It sounds like: "Don't impose your religion on me." "Keep your religion to yourself." "Don't give me all that religion. That's your truth. Not mine." "I have the right to freedom from religion." That last one rings very true in our world today, where "freedom of religion"⁶ has been spun to "freedom from religion."⁷

The kingdom of darkness wants to prevent you from hearing the Word of God. Daily devotions, Bible study, worship services. Do you find ways to dodge, dismiss, discount and ignore them? Do you brush it aside as irrelevant or boring? What do you look to most? The news or the Bible. Satan's seduction never stops. Know your enemy. The enemy wants to prevent you from hearing the life-giving Word of God. The enemy wants you to listen to yourself.

The priest Amaziah had no intention of listening and repenting. His focus was only about self-preservation. Amos was called and sent by the God to proclaim the Lord's Word. Amos remained true, and proclaimed the Word of God.

4 Matthew 7:13-14

5 Amos 7:13

6 From the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights, US Constitution.

7 A financially powerful group from Madison Wisconsin who seek to silence God's Word in public forums.

The Word of God will remain. God will not be silenced. God is a God who speaks. He does not hide Himself in secrecy or in secret arts like divination, sorcery, numerology or astrology, or by self actualization. The true God, the Lord Almighty, the Creator, speaks. We see that throughout history starting with Genesis chapter one. The true God speaks so that He can be heard and understood. The true God does not speak in secret code, but is open and transparent. The true God reveals His will and His ways in clarity.

The true God wants His Word to be preached, proclaimed, spoken, and written. Why? Because through His Word, the Holy Spirit leads you to repentance and reconciliation with God. That was why God called Amos. That is why God calls pastors and priests today. So that people would turn from their sin, and turn to the God. Only the Word of God can lead sinners out of the trap of sin and death. Listen to what the Lord has to say.

In Amos time they didn't. At that time ancient Israel rejected the Word of God spoken to them and listened only to themselves. They brought God's judgment on themselves. God raised up ancient Assyria, who came to destroyed the kingdom. Then a century later, God raised up ancient Babylon to destroy even the very city of Jerusalem. God is patient. God is kind. God is long suffering, but we should not abuse His love for us. The sentence came down on them, just like Amos had proclaimed., but that was not the end of the story.

God does not judge without giving a promise. God through his prophet Amos spoke a sure and certain promise that one day, God would reverse the judgment. God promised⁸ that he would raise up the throne of David again. There will be a new and greater "Son of David." God would restore His people

In the fullness of time, that promise was fulfilled. Jesus of Nazareth is the new and greater Davidic King. Jesus came as the new and greater Prophet, and like the prophets of old, He was rejected. Sinners, like you and me, wanted to listen only to themselves, even when the Word made Flesh walked among them and proclaimed the truth. That rejection brought death, but this time God's judgment fell on God, in a most unimaginable selfless act. Jesus died a more severe death, suffering the punishment against all sinners. The God of Israel laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

8 Amos 9:11-15

Jesus suffered in your place and for your sins. Then he died in your place and for your sins. Then God raised Him up from the grave. Jesus of Nazareth is Lord of all.

Listen to what the Lord has to say. Only His Word can lead you to repentance. Only His Word can lead you to reconciliation with God. Only His Word can instill and sustain faith. Only His Word can lead you to life eternal.

There are many voices, including your own, making for a din of noise that would drown out the voice of God. So listen closely, listen carefully. Listen to what the Lord has to say.

God Word proclaims:

My Word that goes out from My mouth;
shall not return to Me empty.

It shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. ⁹

Thus says the Lord. Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

