

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 18, 2021 – Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam

Amos 7:10-15

¹⁰ Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. ¹¹ For this is what Amos is saying:

“Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.”

¹² Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. ¹³ Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.”

¹⁴ Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. ¹⁵ But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)

This past week the WELS through electronic media celebrated **A Taste of Missions**. I hope that some of you were able to tune in via WELS.net. There were daily devotions, “Moments with Missionaries”, panel discussions and then last evening a live closing service, featuring the installation of five new missionaries. If you didn’t get see it, I encourage you to go to wels.net and click on the Taste of Missions link on the home page and take some time to get to know more about the work which we participate in with our mission offerings.

On Tuesday evening there was a live panel discussion led by Rev. Larry Schlomer the administrator for WELS World Missions. The three panelists were Missionaries Mike Duncan, Joel Sutton and Dan Witte. Missionary Duncan spoke about how our work in Nepal got started. An inactive WELS member was riding on a bus in Nepal and was reading a Meditations and a Forward in Christ. When he finished his seat mate asked about the materials and read them eagerly. He then asked if the man could get him more similar materials. He went home to Madison and gave the contact information to his pastor who sent a catechism and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ began in a place where there are virtually no Christians. Missionary Duncan went on to speak about how that work has exploded and the great eagerness of people to learn more and the sacrifices they make to get to Bible studies and training sessions.

I think that there are some similarities to the story of Amos. Today we can sum those up through this encouragement:

Share Jesus by Sharing His Word

- **Despite the lies of the false prophets**
- **Call people to repentance and faith.**

We can begin by reviewing the setting of Amos’ ministry. It was about 750 B.C. -- about 200 years after the reign of King Solomon. After Solomon’s death the northern ten tribes of Israel broke away from the rule of the line of David. The northern kingdom was called Israel and the southern kingdom was called Judah. King Jeroboam the First began a line of kings which were all wicked. He established two places of worship so that the Israelites would not go to worship in Jerusalem. He wanted to sever

every connection to the center of the Old Testament Jewish faith. Those two centers of worship were Dan in the north and Bethel in the south. He had two silver calves made, following the example of the wicked Canaanites who also inhabited the region.

So it was to Bethel that God directed Amos. His message was one of coming destruction and captivity because of the wickedness and unbelief of the Israelites. In the verse just before this morning's reading Amos proclaimed God's message: *"The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam."* (v.9)

The Jeroboam he is referring to is Jeroboam the Second, the current king, who was no relation to the first Jeroboam, but followed the wickedness of the first Jeroboam. The current priest in Bethel was Amaziah. We hear his reaction to the ministry of Amos in verses 10 and 11 in the message he sent to Jeroboam: *"Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. For this is what Amos is saying: "Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.""* Amaziah's message was not truthful. It mixed in lies with truth. Amos talked about destruction and the sword but not that Jeroboam would be killed. Amaziah was trying to silence the voice of God.

Does this sound familiar? Just think how much the voice of God is being silenced today! In government and politics, in academia, in advertising, in electronic media, in society and the morals which society promotes the voice of God is being silenced. Satan would even enter into our own hearts and minds to try to get us to the Word of God just as Amaziah did! How nice it sounds to hear in these days of great ecumenism that every religion is the same and that everyone will get to heaven, just in different ways. God's voice that says there is but one name under heaven by which we must be saved is silenced. The world says and wants us to buy into the idea that truth is relative and that each person can pick his own truth. But Jesus says *"I am the truth."*

The immorality of our age assaults our senses in so many ways as it tries to silence what God has to say about how he wants us to use (or not use) the truth that he has made us male and female and how he want us to use that sexuality. God's voice is silenced when we get so busy and wrapped up in our daily lives that personal and family time with the Word and church attendance gets shoved aside.

Amaziah also lied when he spoke to Amos: *"Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. ¹³ Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom."* He was saying that Amos had chosen to come to Bethel on his own and that he was just carrying out his ministry to make a buck for himself.

Amos responded to Amaziah's lies by saying: *"I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees."* Amos' preference was to be back at home taking care of his flocks and his fig trees. He wasn't prophesying for profit. He was sharing God's Word. He was calling the people of Bethel to repentance and faith. He was sharing Jesus. Just listen to the final verses of this prophecy:

"In that day "I will restore David's fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be, ¹² so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the LORD, who will do these things. ¹³ "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the

mountains and flow from all the hills, ¹⁴ and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. “They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the LORD your God.

This is a picture of the peace and total happiness of heaven. This is what God offers through the proclamation of Amos.

Amos faced the opposition of the high priest, the people, and even the government at the time. It must have seemed so unfair. He hadn't signed up for this. He wasn't qualified for this. Given the choice, he probably would have rather been back tending flocks and caring for trees. But it wasn't his choice. It was God's choice to choose him to share His Word with people. Listening to God's Word. Obeying God's Word. Sharing God's Word. God doesn't give us choices in these matters. For the many times we thought we had choices in these matters, for the many times we've tried to silence the voice of God, we can be thankful that God sent Jesus. The Savior who perfectly listened, obeyed, and shared God's Word to forgive the many times we haven't. The Savior who was faithful with the message even though many people wanted to shoot the messenger. They wouldn't shoot him. They would do something much worse. They would nail him to a cross and mock him as he died. But Jesus didn't seek revenge, rather he asked his Heavenly Father to forgive them. And not only did his Heavenly Father forgive them, he forgave you and me as well. Yes, through the perfect life, the innocent death, and the glorious resurrection of Jesus, all of your sins have been forgiven and eternal life in heaven is yours as a totally free gift. His love for us is what strengthens and motivates us to share his love with all people. He gives us the command to go and make disciples of all nations and he gives us the promise that he will be with us always to the very end of the age.

Unlike the prophet Amos, you don't have to quit your day job. In fact, your day job is probably your best opportunity to be and do what God calls you to be and do. Jesus tells us, “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” God's Word is the ultimate authority on what's right and wrong. God's Word tells us to be holy. God's Word reminds us that we aren't. God's Word tells us how Jesus kept it perfectly for us and died for our sins against it. God's Word gives us what we need to speak the truth in love with gentleness and respect, to remain Scripturally-correct in a politically-correct world. Chances are you won't face the kind of opposition that Amos faced. Chances are you won't even face the kind of opposition that many Christians around the world face today. But you will be persecuted on account of your faith. Laughter, ridicule, rolled eyes, rejection. Jesus tells us, *“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also....they will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* Because he has, we have too!

I wish the words and work of Amos would have resulted in a happy ending. I wish the words and work of Amos would have resulted in the nation of Israel turning from their sins and returning to God. The judgment Amos warned them about took place about 30 years later when Israel was dispersed in the Assyrian captivity. I can't guarantee that your words and work will always result in people turning from their sins and turning to God. Not even Jesus himself was 100% successful in doing that. He made God's Word his pleasure and treasure and delighted in sharing it with others and calls his disciples to do the same. He went to work in the harvest fields because they were ripe and waiting, just like they are today. Your words and work will have a happy ending, when your Savior says, “well

done, good and faithful servant. Come and share your master's happiness! Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." Listen. Your Savior is calling, "who will go and work today?" May our ears be quick to listen and our mouths quick to respond, "Here am I! Send me!"

Joel Jaeger