

## **“WHAT DO YOU SEE?”**

Amos 8:1-12 July 20, 2025

A priest, a doctor, and an engineer were waiting one morning for a particularly slow group of **golfers**. The engineer fumed, "**What's with those guys? We must have been waiting for fifteen minutes!**" The doctor chimed in, "**I don't know, but I've never seen such inept golf!**" The priest said, "**Here comes the greens-keeper. Let's have a word with him.**" He said, "**Hello George, What's wrong with that group ahead of us? They're rather slow, aren't they?**"

The greens-keeper replied, "**Oh, yes. That's a group of blind firemen. They lost their sight saving our clubhouse from a fire last year, so we always let them play for free anytime!**"

The group fell silent for a moment. The priest said, "**That's so sad. I think I will say a special prayer for them tonight.**" The doctor said, "**Good idea. I'm going to contact my ophthalmologist colleague and see if here's anything she can do for them.**"

The engineer thought a moment and said, "**Why can't they just play at night?**"

One of the struggles of communication is that no one views life completely from another's perspective. What you see isn't necessarily what someone else sees. It's like the two men who were on opposite sides of a river.

The first man shouts: "**How do I get to the other side?**"

The second shouts back: "**You are on the other side!**"

We have all run into similar situations where on the surface the job, the new relationship, or a purchase looked good, but turned out to be rather disappointing or a complete disaster. If you understand this idea, then you are going to understand our object lesson from the prophet Amos. One day God shows Amos a basket of summer fruit. God asks Amos, **“Amos, what do you see?”** Amos replies, **“A basket of summer fruit.”**

A basket of summer fruit would be our idea of Fall Harvest. We might picture a **horned Cornucopia Basket** with vegetables flowing out in abundance. Under normal circumstances this would be a good vision, a symbol of wealth and prosperity. It would usher in a time of celebration and thanksgiving. The basket of summer fruit appeared to be a forecast announcing a good future. **Nothing could be further from the truth.**

Have you ever unintentionally stepped into a cold shower? There is that initial shock to the system. If you weren't awake before you are now. The following prophetic words had that effect. Amos sees this beautiful basket of summer fruit only to be told, **“The end has come upon my people Israel; I will spare them no longer!”** What he sees and what he hears are contrasting messages. God proclaims the days of trying to correct Israel's bad behavior are over. The days of abundance are finished. **Ba haqqes!** The end has come! The day of Yahweh has arrived. Now instead of building there will be destruction. Instead of cries of celebration there will be wailing. Instead of new life there will be corpses.

Even more shocking, guess where this terrible day will begin! In the temple, the Church. **“The songs of the temple shall become wailings on**

**that day, says the Lord God. The dead bodies shall be many, cast out in every place. Be silent!"** The place where praise and worship has become a place of mourning, wailing, heartache and death. Of all the places, why is the church the beginning point for this end? I believe it's because there is something spiritually wrong in Israel and the temple is the seat of the nation's spirit. The people looked good, but they were rotten on the inside. So what's the problem. **Marketing.**

## **I. MARKET PROBLEM**

A man was looking in the classified ads for a job. He notices an advertisement for a **toothbrush salesman**. So, he calls the number, goes in for an interview, and they hire him. The next day, he heads out to a neighborhood to make some sales. Five hours later he comes home and says, **"Man, I only sold one toothbrush. That's not enough"**

So the next day he goes to a richer neighborhood, thinking maybe those people would buy more toothbrushes. He ends up selling two toothbrushes. The man goes to his boss for advice and his boss says, **"Look, you're a great guy and all, but you gotta come up with a gimmick or something."**

The salesman thinks about it and, comes up with one. The next day, he sets up a booth near the subway with a sign that reads **"Free chips and dip"** A guy walks over and puts the chip in the dip, takes a bite and says, **"This stuff tastes awful."**

And the salesman replied, **"Yeah, it does. Wanna buy a toothbrush?"**

## **A. FOCUS OF LIFE**

Amos proclaims, **“When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale?”**

Amos is talking about people who have come to church to look good and religious, but whose hearts are focused on making money. He is speaking about greed that has run amok. To capitalize on every opportunity to increase sales, as though that is the goal of life, is missing the point of life.

The bible never condemns people for making a buck, earning a living, or even having wealth. But it comes with a **big red warning flag**. Don't be consumed by it. Psalm 62:10 says, **“Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.”** Even Jesus said, **“It is difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** These passages are asking the question what have you set your heart on? Amos is describing a heart problem. If you choose wealth over God the end is destruction. What do you see in our own culture?

Is money all we talk about, think about, and are driven by? How much do we give away to others, the church, or help those in need? Is our faith only a matter of the Sunday hour? Where are our hearts? What is the focus of our lives?

## **B. CHEATING**

One day I came home from church and saw a man looking at my car in the driveway. He was a rough-looking character with a scar on his face. Immediately, my mind jumped to an enforcer from the movie the

God Father. It turned out he was a detective tracing stolen vehicles and my car happened to be one. Now I purchased this used car from a local Ford Dealer. Which led me to question, what is a car dealer doing with selling a stolen vehicle?

The situation in Israel is even worse than mere greed. Amos proclaims, **“We will make the ephah smaller and the shekel heavier and practice deceit with false balances.”** Amos is talking about the merchants use of smaller baskets and heavier weights to sell their products. **This is the proverbial butcher with his thumb on the scale.** In Israel, extortion had become the norm. Cheating in the name of making money was acceptable. What about us?

How much markup do manufacturers put on items? How much false advertising – claiming blatantly untrue facts about a product to attract customers, takes place? How much money do we take under the table, cut corners, cheat and lie and steal? How much do we say, well we aren’t hurting anyone or that’s the customer’s problem or the government doesn’t deserve it? How we make money matters to God. Integrity in business impacts everyone and our very own spirits. If we cheat in small ways, what’s to stop us in bigger ways?

### **C. IMPOVERISHING THE POOR AND NEEDY.**

But in Israel, the situation was even worse. Amos proclaims, **“Hear this, you who trample the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land...buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”**

The people of Israel were so greedy cheating and extorting that they were ruining peoples' lives and taking delight in doing so. They took advantage of the most vulnerable of their culture, basically putting them in debt and slaving them out. They even sold the leftover scraps of food that were supposed to feed the hungry. Such was their avarice!

What about our neighborhood and country? Is the cost of higher education reasonable OR do we enslave our young people for decades to come? How are underpaid workers treated in sweat shops, migrant farms, so we can get a good deal? How is it we think health care is only for those who can afford it, meaning it's okay for people to have to choose between insulin or food. And how can the Federal Minimum Wage, which PA follows, still be \$7.25 hour since 2009. We complain about people living on the streets, but provide no affordable housing. Have we sold the poor for a pair of sandals?

## **II. NATURAL DISASTERS**

In response to these marketplace practices, Amos goes on to describe four natural disasters as acts of divine judgment; earthquakes, eclipses, famine and floods. The reason for these disasters is the presence of social injustice. God is saying, just as you are tossing the poor about, I am going to toss you about. Just as you walk in darkness I will take away your light. Just as you starve the poor, I will feed you no longer. Because you have flooded your nation with corruption, I will flood your streets and wash you away.

Walter Brueggemann, In the “**Prophetic Imagination**” writes, Israel’s physical health depended entirely on its spiritual health, and the barometer of spiritual health was not primarily adherence to cultic regulations but, rather, the consistent and programmatic protection of the weak from the unscrupulous strong. **Translation**, the well-being of a nation, is connected to how we treat and provide for the least of these.

### **III. WORSE CAN’T CONNECT WITH GOD**

My wife and I often travel west to visit our children along the I-80 highway. There is a section of the highway where we often lose reception on our **mobile phones**. The positioning of the mountains and the satellites prevents the signal from connecting properly. The songs on the radio and the highway directions suddenly stop broadcasting and there is silence.

In verse 12, Amos gives the most chilling news. **“The time is surly coming says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.”**

The terrible sad news of this judgment passage is God ceases to communicate with Israel. No matter how hard they look, pray, or sacrifice God no longer hears or answers. There is only silence. Deuteronomy 8:3 says, **“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”** Jesus said, **“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”**

God's word creates life, redemption, freedom, prosperity, peace, shalom. To not have it is to not have life. To not live by it is to reject life. This is not legalism, but a spiritual truth. The message of Amos is it matters what you set your heart upon. Set it upon the Living God and his Word. It matters how we view wealth, not as our center but as a tool to bless others. It matters how we earn it, not by theft and extortion, but with good work and integrity. It matters how we spend it, not to have much stuff, but to lift others up.

God asked Amos, "What do you see?" God is asking us that same question. "What do we see?" Do we see gold or people? Do we see the needs of our own community? Do we see how we have cut corners? Do we see the impact we have on others? What do you see? Amen.



# **First Presbyterian Church in Hawley**

## **Sunday, July 20, 2025**

### **Second Scripture Lesson**

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#### **Amos 8:1-12**

<sup>1</sup>Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

<sup>2</sup>And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

<sup>3</sup>And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

<sup>4</sup>Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

<sup>5</sup>Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

<sup>6</sup>That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

<sup>7</sup>The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

<sup>8</sup>Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

<sup>9</sup>And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

<sup>10</sup>And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

<sup>11</sup>Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

<sup>12</sup>And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

**+This is the Word of the Lord.**

Thanks be To God.