

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 8B - Proper 10B
July 14, 2024
Amos 7:7-15

The Priest (Politician) and the Prophet

This is what he 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." (Amos 7:7-9 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

God's Word is truth and must be proclaimed no matter how it is received. Yet, for the one who proclaims that Word, the result is often rejection and even opposition. Yet, woe to the one charged to proclaim that Word and doesn't, or waters it down to make it more palatable and acceptable. And woe to the one who refuses to hear that Word faithfully preached and refuses to repent and believe. For that Word is Truth and that Word is Life.

Amos was sent to proclaim God's Word to the northern kingdom of Israel. He was sent to proclaim God's wrath and judgment on people who had rejected God's Word and worshiped false gods. They were guilty of gross, manifest violations of the First and Second Commandments ... no other gods and no misuse of the Name of the LORD God. They mixed worship of the true God with the worship of idols and false gods. As a consequence of their idolatry and faithlessness, God declared that He would permit them to be taken into exile. And further, "Behold, ... 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" (Amos 7:9).

To be sure those were hard words to hear. No one wants to hear doom and gloom. No one wants to hear about judgment, destruction, and other calamities. Yet, when it comes from the mouth of the Lord, even though His servant, it should be taken to heart.

And, while God had warned them about all this before, it was not well received by Amaziah the priest. For Amaziah was an unfaithful priest who was more a politician. He would not stop the idolatry that was happening. In fact, he approved and authorized, defended and supported it. So he determined that Amos had to be silenced. Amos had to go.

So Amaziah, 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.'" In other words, "O dear king, such words are treason. This Amos is among us saying that you are going to die by the sword and that your people will be taken away into a foreign land."

Now, Amaziah very shrewdly does not stress Amos' denunciation of Israel's apostasy from the Lord, does not mention his pleas for repentance, nor his pleadings with God (vv. 2, 5). He deliberately changes [Amos'] general threat (v. 9b) into a personal threat against Jeroboam (v. 11). As a good politician he does not mention his own interest in the deportation of Amos, but only his patriotic concern for the welfare of the community: "The land is not able to bear all his word." People were beginning to listen to him [Amos], perhaps even daring to criticize prevailing conditions, to speak of the need of reform. Such action, of course, seemed like high treason to the priest of Bethel. To allow a man like Amos to continue his activity would endanger the welfare of the state, would spell ruin and disaster to the kingdom. ("The Minor Prophets" by Theodore Laetsch).

Amaziah could not tolerate Amos' intolerance. He could not let the people continue to hear the truth. And while the Bible doesn't report any reply from King Jeroboam, the Scriptures do record what the priestly politician did next. "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.'" In other words, "Look, you 'troubler of Israel' [1 Kings 18:16-17], stop it! Go back from where you came from. And never return."

The Prophet's reply? Ponder first, what Amos did not say. Twice before in this chapter of Amos, the LORD planned to call a day of judgment. Twice before the Prophet petitioned God beseeching His mercy (verses 2 & 5). Twice before Jehovah relented and the execution was stayed. Twice, but not thrice. Listen as the faithful Amos remains steadfast in the Word and Work of the LORD God Almighty:

"Then Amos answered Amaziah, 'I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to My people Israel." Now therefore hear the Word of the LORD. You say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac." Therefore thus says the LORD: "Your wife shall be a harlot in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be parceled out by line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.'" (Amos 7:14-17).

Thus, even in the face of opposition, the faithful prophet will tell you the Truth of God and nothing but the Truth in exposing the lie of man. He will abide by the Apostolic charge to "preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

The faithful prophet will preach and teach the Law of God that always accuses the old sinful nature in each of us. This Word of the Lord is proclaimed in all its sternness and severity. He will declare the consequences of sin ... Divine condemnation, eternal death, everlasting destruction. He will not exclude himself or his fellow, faithful pastors from such declarations, saying, "even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

The faithful, called man of God will also proclaim the Lord's Good News and teach the Gospel of Emmanuel; that is, the Word of God that always comforts the repentant soul who looks to Christ crucified and risen. He will tell the contrite soul, "Fear not, for the Incarnate Son of God atoned for all your sins - that Jesus was condemned in your place - that Jesus silently bore the penalty for all the transgressions of your mouth - that Jesus died your death in your place - that God's Only-Begotten Son thought on you when He offered His Blood on behalf of your sins of thought - that Christ's active obedience in fulfilling the Law is accomplished for your active disobedience - that the Lamb of God's passive obedience on the cross takes away the sins of your passive disobedience - that in Jesus' Resurrection your death has been defeated - that in His gift of Baptism you have been 'born from above' (John 3:3) and made an heir of an 'inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you' (1 Pet. 1:4) - that, according to His Word, 'as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us' (Ps. 103:12) - that the Cup of Blessing which we bless is a participation in the Blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16), the Blood shed for you for the remission of sins - that God has redeemed you and called you by name and declared that you are His own dearly beloved - He will never leave you nor forsake you.

The faithful soul will never perish and the One true Church will never perish. That is God's promise. There is, however, no such promise for a particular nation, district, land, synod, or congregation. The sorely divided people would suffer the consequences of their religious leader's unbelief. The faithless politician, along with his many supporters in the religious assembly didn't want the Word of God preached in its truth and purity ... in a frightening judgment on such an expression of unbelief, what Amaziah and his supporters wanted was precisely what he and many others received. The Presence of the Lord departed from them and the nation was taken into exile.

And what would the faithful prophet do and say if the politician confessed his sins, repented of them and trusted in the LORD God? The prophet would raise his hand, make the sign of the cross, and announce what you hear every Sunday in the Divine Service ... you are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener
Pastor

Immanuel Lutheran Church of Augsburg
1297 E 900 Ave.
Shobonier, IL 62885
church: (618) 846-8383
personal cell: 330-204-4180