

Who me? I am just...!

Amos 7:10-15

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Did any of you read your papers today? Did you hear about what happened over at the Utz board room the other day? Well the president and the many vice-presidents of day to day operations in the different divisions were meeting to analyze the first two quarters of sales and production. Everyone was there the CEO, the Board, the President, Vice President, all together in the corporate board room. They were gathering to analyze the market, and figure how best to improve sales. The past year's trends have been wonderful. The plants are producing more and people are buying them. Even during a recession they are doing wonderful, sales are up, more people are staying home and eating snack foods around the backyard, the pools, the BBQ's. And right when they began to analyze the Product awareness and name recognition which by the way has never been greater, right when the marketing people were talking, in to the board room burst a man who started shouting and railing against their management and their abilities. Before security could stop this man, he had disrupted the meeting, and was screaming a message of doom and gloom, warning the executives that unless they changed their business practices the company was doomed. He warned them that the plants and their workers were unsafe, their equipment was lacking and that the engineers weren't keeping them up to code and safety regulations, it was just a matter of time before hundreds or thousands of serious injuries would occur. He warned them that their name would be ruined. People would stop indulging in their snack foods, and pretty soon they would be bankrupt. He kept insisting that he knew the truth, that the company was doomed, they had lost their way, and turned from the good name they once had.

Trying to calm the man and keep cool heads while security was sent for, the president of the company spoke to the disgruntled protestor. He asked him how he knew all this. Did he work for them in the lines or was in distributions somewhere? "No", the man said, "I just know the truth." And he went on repeating his warning of doom.

"So what do you do for a living, are you a company analyst, an engineer, a safety inspector, do you have a experience in the snack food industries?" the president continued to ask the man.

"Nope, I work out in the apple orchards of Adams county for a living, but I know the truth." The man replied.

“You’re a apple picker? And your telling us that you know our company and product better then us? We all have been to some of the greatest universities in the country, with the best educations and experiences. Sitting here in this room, are lawyers, engineers, managers all with vast know how and technical jargon of our company and our products. We have sold billions of dollars each year and continue to grow stronger each year, we have never been richer or more powerful, and yet you an apple picker dare to tell us we are doing it wrong. That’s unbelievable,” the president said amazed at this disgruntled smelly orchard worker. Grumbling about him as security hauled him away.

Okay by now I hope you know that story really wasn’t in the paper this morning and that I was making it up to give you a picture, to catch your attention and get you in the right mind set. We all know Utz and probably eat some of their snack foods ourselves. And I am sure the boards and the president and vice-presidents do get together and have planning meetings. They probably meet to go over stock trends and market supplies and all that stuff. And I wonder if a man that was a apple picker who burst into their board room screaming would even be listened to? I think the police and security would have been there real fast hauling him away. He could probably get a few shouts in before security would catch him and haul him away to prison. But once he was gone, they wouldn’t even think of it again, unless there was some bad press from it, and then they would have to explain news media want went on, calming it all down and smoothing it over, putting a good spin on it with a good PR show. But what if that disrupting tree picker actually knew what he was talking about. What if he had been told something about one of their plants from someone that knew first hand that it was dangerous, that what they were doing and making could be dangerous and would cause the eventual destruction of the company. Even though they were doing great, well off, powerful, and the future looked great for them, by ignoring this one part of their company, by overlooking this one thing, it could bring ruin to the whole corporation. Could it happen, lawsuits and bad names, reputations and the risk of contaminated foods can bring down even the greatest of companies. It could happen, that’s what makes the story plausible.

Now that you have that image in mind, you can understand a little about what Amos was going through. The prophet Amos lived 770-750 years before Christ. He lived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. You see after King Solomon, the third King of Israel died, his mighty nation was split in two. The northern kingdom kept the name Israel and the southern kingdom became Judah. Both Nations were filled with Jewish descendants of Abraham, from the twelve tribes and they all believed in Yahweh. But with the split of the country the northern Kingdom of Israel

had been cut off from the capital city and the religious temple of Jerusalem. King Jeroboam the 1st didn't want the people crossing out of the country to go and worship in the southern kingdom, so he took it upon himself to establish a new center of worship at Bethel in the Northern Kingdom. Are you following all this. These were all Jewish people, but now two distinct countries Israel in the North and Judah in the South. They worshipped God and followed the same torah laws of Moses' commands, but now they each believed their holy temple was better than the other. The Kingdoms were both well off, remember Solomon had been a mighty king and rich in wealth. But time passes and the competition between the two countries grows and the rivalry between the Jerusalem temple and the Bethel temple heats up. And now Jeroboam the 2nd is now on the throne of the northern Kingdom and has been establishing new laws and practices that end up turning people away from knowing God and trusting in him. And even though that was all happening, the both countries had been prospering. They didn't feel the pressure. Foreign countries had been at war amongst themselves so they lived in relative peace. They had strengthened and broadened their borders, business was good, economy was good. Worship at Bethel was good. Everyone thought it was just okie-dokie. They blended their beliefs in with whatever the latest craze were, whatever the social trends of the days were and pretty soon, God calls down to Amos to go and burst into Israel and tell them they are doomed.

Amos a keeper of herds and a tree tender comes from Judah, the Southern Kingdom, to tell the Religious leaders of Israel that they must repent, He says in chapter five to "seek the Lord and Live". He says later to "Seek good and not evil, that you may live and so the Lord, the God of hosts will be with you". "Hate evil and love good". He warns them that the day of the Lord's vengeance is coming and it will not be a vengeance against their enemies but against them, and their sinful ways. The country will be destroyed. In the beginning of Chapter seven Amos takes the plumb line and starts measuring Israel, physically showing them, that the people, that the temple, that the cities, are corrupt, not righteous and are about to be destroyed. It might seem great now and the country is on top of the world but Amos says God is coming and bringing the wrath along.

As the text tells us, the High priest reported the contents of the prophetic message to the King. The king needed to hear of the trouble maker and his absurd tales. But they did not listen. Amaziah even forbids Amos to continue talking and preaching in Bethel and in the entire Northern kingdom of Israel. By rejecting Amos and his words, Amaziah, Jeroboam, and all of Israel reject God. And the destruction begins, in 722 B.C. the Assyrian army comes in and

destroys the Northern Kingdom of Israel and is conquered over and over again by foreign oppressors, from the Assyrians to the Babylonians, to the Greeks to the Romans.

So does the message of Amos still impact us today. 2600 years later the same words need to be heard today. We are the chosen ones, God's people, saved and claimed by the grace of Jesus Christ, made a part of the everlasting family. Ephesians talks about this great blessing in our second reading. "Just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ..." In our baptism, God the Father, takes us and claims us as part of the eternal family. It is not by our own doing, but is by the Holy Spirit who marks you with the seal of redemption and inheritance in God's kingdom.

And the prophetic words of Amos still comes to us through the pages of Scripture. Through this message, God is calling us to ask ourselves some important questions, are we listening to his word? Are we in plump line, are we straight with God. Am I using all that God has given me, my time, my talent and my resources to the best of my ability in the praise and work of God? Am I a servant of God, living a pure and decent life, doing the work of the Gospel in love and devotion? Am I concerned with all those family members, neighbors and strangers around the world that are not in God's salvation, and have rejected him. Am I concerned about their eternal life, enough to go and share with them my faith and the Spirit that is within me.

I am sure that Amos wasn't thrilled to go to another country, to tell them something that they were not going to like to hear, to risk home and family and his life itself to tell those unhearing people of his day, that its time to return to God and follow the ways of Scripture. But he did it. And his words still echo through time and space to this very time, calling us to do the same. To listen, to repent and follow God, to become disciples and be his servants trusting fully in all that he would have us do. May we be filled with the Spirit this day, Knowing that in fact we are God's children, sent with a message to all the word. Trust in it, listen to it and tell it to all that you meet. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty God, we humbly come before your presence this day to praise and give thanks for your love. For the gift of your Son who lived knowing that he would go to the cross and die a terrible death so that we may be given a place in your kingdom, Adopted by you and

commissioned as your people, as your servants and your church everlasting. We give thanks for this gift of fire that burns with in each of us through our baptisms.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer..

Almighty Everlasting Father we remember before you this day all those who are separated from your love and the love of family and friends. Grant them peace and bring an end to war and violence. Allow all those who suffer in this fallenness of this world, turn to you and find your peace. Gently lead them by you grace and help them walk on the path of understanding, forgiveness, and peace. May they be filled with your spirit and guide us in being your witnesses to them so that they may hear of your love and be connected to your everlasting grace.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

God, stretch out your saving hand to those who are sick. With your strong love, comfort the lonely, the oppressed, and all who suffer. Give healing to those who are afflicted. Give peace to those troubled both physically and mentally. Impart your Holy Comforter to be with them in their times of need. Especially we remember today our shut-ins and all those we lift up in our prayers to you...

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for this community of faithful; teach us to use the many gifts you have given us for the common good. Empower us to sing your praise on earth and lead others to find your love. Take us with all your children through this life until we join the angels and saints in heaven. Bless the people gathered here and continue to send us out renewed and filled with your mission to our community and beyond.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Into your hands, o Lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.