

The Parish of Wellow

The Plumb Line

Amos 7:7-9

Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during the next few weeks to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passage - Amos 7:7-9

7 This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand.

8 And the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied. Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.

9 "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."

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 How frequently do we compare ourselves to other people?

- Many of us probably think that we are:
 - More or less mature
 - More or less competent
 - More or less able

Than members of our family, our friends and colleagues at work.

- The only problem of course with determining our self-worth by comparing ourselves with others is that we are using the wrong measuring stick.
- The people of Israel, living 800 years before the birth of Christ, thought that they were living righteous lives but Amos the prophet came with words from God to remind them that there was no point measure themselves against one another but that they had to measure themselves by the standard of the Word of God.

2.2 Amos challenges the 8th Century BC Israelites and by inference us to think about our standard of holiness.

- As individuals do we compare ourselves to those whom we consider to be more or less righteous than we are?
- As a church do we compare our ministry with that of the church down the road?
- If we are making such mistaken comparisons in our Christian walk, then we need to discover the true standard by which God compares us.

2.3 'The Wall' in Amos' vision is Israel and God has built 'the wall' straight with the use of a plumb line.

- Amos sees the Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand.
- The wall in Amos' vision was Israel.
- Amos tells us that this wall "had been made with a plumb line," or had been built true to plumb. The wall had been built straight.
- Symbolically, what this meant was that Israel had been rightly and properly established as a nation. The Lord had given His people the purest ordinances, statues, and regulations for church, state, and society. Everything was in holy order. Everything was directed to its proper goal, which was the glory of God.
- What God has done for Israel in the Old Testament He also does for the church in the New Testament period as well. He has built her squarely and solidly on the foundation of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected.

2.4 In Amos' vision God has returned to his wall 'Israel' with a plumb line to check whether the wall is still vertical or not.

- In Amos's day plumb lines were used a great deal because stone walls were built with little or no mortar and would slowly shift and settle until they were badly out of line.
- A plumb line therefore was a vital tool to tell whether or not a wall was leaning, whether it was safe or dangerous.
- The Lord said to Amos, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; (v. 8).
- Amos knew what this meant: just as a wall was built with a plumb line and later checked with one, so the Lord who had built and established Israel was now checking on his people with a plumb line.
- God is telling Israel through Amos' vision that he has arrived on the scene and was planning to check Israel against the plumb line of His law, the word of God.
- Amos knew all too well what God would find. He knew the lack of justice and righteousness in Israel; he knew that Israel's worship was all show and not at all heart-felt. Back in Chapter 5 verse 21 we read: "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. Israel had been built on the foundation of God's word, but she had allowed the dirt and filth of the world to push her over to topple down the slippery slope of sin.

2.5 What would the Lord find if he were to visit us with a plumb line in His hand?

- Are we living up to our calling to serve the Lord in all the areas of our life, or do we just serve him on Sundays?
- What about our worship? Is our worship all show, for others to look at us and think we are better Christians as a result?
- Or is our worship heart-felt, do we come to church on Sunday, because we want to meet with God and hear from him?
- Are we what the Lord wants us to be - the salt of the earth, and a city set on a hill? Are our lives an example for others to follow?
- How does our church measure up to the Lord's plumb line?
- When the Lord checks us out, will He find little or a great deal of love among us? Will He find a people who care for and support each other?
- When the Lord examines us, will He find selfishness and greed? Will He find materialism, worldliness, jealousy, lust, or quarrelling?
- Or, will He find a church filled with a passion for the Lord and the things of the Lord?
- Will He find a church that is holy and pure in all things?
- Will He find a church that is always true to His Word?

2.6 Let us not forget that God will check every part of our lives against his Holy Word, which we find in the Bible.

- There's no use hoping that God will forget to look in some nook or cranny of our lives, our marriages, our homes, or our church.
- There is no use hoping that something might escape God's attention. Everything will be checked very carefully against the plumb line of His perfect word.
- Occasionally it takes an Amos to come into our midst to make us realise our faults.
- It may be that we are heading one way when we should be going in the opposite direction.
- If we are unsure of the direction in which are going we need look no further than God's Holy Word, the Bible, which is our plumb line.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 In Amos' vision what do the 'wall' and the 'plumb line' symbolise?

3.2 A friend of yours says to you one day that he leads a good life and doesn't do anything wrong. What would your response be?

3.3 A close Christian friend mentions to you that his church does do things so much better than other local churches. What would your response be?

3.4 What would the Lord find if he were to visit your Church with a plumb line in His hand? What would he find if he were to visit you?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 437724