



Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 20, 2025

St. Luke's Episcopal Church The Very Rev. Holladay Sanderson

Amos 8:1-12 Psalm 52 Colossians 1:15-28 Luke 10:38-42

Not many folks would check the Old Testament lessons
for these few weeks of Year C and say
"Oh Goodie!! What fun lessons!"
Frankly, from last week's talk of God's plumb line
to this week's mysterious and fleeting basket of summer fruit,
and so forth until Isaiah introduces God's vineyard
(several weeks away),
we are in the midst now of some pretty harsh words
from the prophets Amos and Hosea.

Amos and Hosea are two of the "minor" prophets of the Bible.
These two were prophets speaking about the exile
of the Northern Kingdom of Israel:
about the Assyrian Captivity.
Their words, like many we hear in the prophetic books
of the Bible, are really harsh.
The lessons we will be reading
over these next few weeks
aren't lessons that really invite us
to open up those books of the Bible.
Still, I would offer you the good news
about ALL of the prophets: words of wisdom
from my own revered Old Testament professor,
Ellen F. Davis.
By the time we get to the end
of EACH of these books,
the prophet always includes
God's promise of restoration.

As with all that God has to offer us,
we WILL receive Good News, indeed.

Also, knowing the promise of restoration exists,
we can find much ease in wallowing comfortably
in the New Testament words of Paul.
The cosmic promises to the Colossians
enable us to wrap ourselves

in all the good, good things that God has to offer and
put Amos aside.

These words also help us
to avoid thinking about the difference
between the servanthood of Martha,
the studiousness of Mary, and
the words of Jesus himself.

Knowing about that escape hatch, it is a bit easier for us
to delve into this uncomfortable lesson from Amos.

Digging more deeply,
we can then open the way
to ponder what on earth we might read or hear in Amos that
has ANYthing to do with the gospel story
about Martha's problem with her sister, Mary.
So, shovels ready...

First, the basket of summer fruit.

I LOVE plums and peaches,
but they are difficult to purchase,
even in season; in summer.
They can start off hard as a rock in the store,
but if we wait too long
for them to get softer (and more luscious),
the lusciousness period doesn't last too long.
They can get wrinkly or mushy way too quickly.
Their time is fleeting; rapid; transitory.
Like most summer fruits,
they don't last very long.

That is exactly what Amos is reminding the northern Kingdom and
us of about the distracted people of Israel.

All those great promises made in the desert
to Moses and Joshua
have not lasted at all.
Those commands summed up by
love God and love your neighbor
are not exactly in force anymore.
The people have found other objects and matters
to care about and worship.

They "trample on the poor and needy," the prophet says.
They cannot wait for holy services and

seasonal rituals to end
 so they can get right back
 into the world of commerce and make MONEY!!
 “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 lets us know that people are cheating their neighbors
 instead of loving them;
 cheating them by “deceit with false balances” and
 unfair business practices.

The Lord, according to Amos, has said
 “I will never forget any of their deeds.”
 Sadly, it is not such a good thing for us
 when God remembers BOTH the good and the bad.
 Since what has been done or left undone,
 as we pray in our own Confession,
 MUST be accounted for,
 we are told that God is not very happy with Israel,
 the northern kingdom.
 “I will make the sun go down at noon...
 I will turn your feasts into mourning...
 I will bring sackcloth on all loins and baldness on all heads...
 I will make it like the mourning for an only son...
 The time is surely coming... when I will send famine...”
 None of this is very good.
 But most grievous of all is that
 there will a famine of “hearing the words of the Lord.”
 So, exile from God is prophesied for Israel.
 They shall seek the word of the Lord,
 but “they shall not find it.”

The Psalm, as we use it in the Revised Common Lectionary,
 is meant to be a response to the Old Testament lesson.
 So, we hear bad news again,
 but now from another perspective,
 almost as if God’s very self
 were not making promises through his prophet.

The Psalmist laments that
 some outside party is predicting evil and ruin against “godly” people.
 The Psalmist even prays that

God would demolish the prophet ...
 or the person foretelling ruin... entirely.
 Then, at the end of this lament,
 the Psalmist reminds us
 of the hope we have in the Lord.
 The righteous ones can see that
 the ones headed for ruin are
 those "who did not take God for a refuge
 but relied on wickedness."
 The psalm closes with the great comfort we have
 in the goodness and mercy of God.
 "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;
 I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

So, at last, just as at the close of the entire book of Amos,
 we receive some good news about God.

Overall, God is reminding
 the people of the northern Kingdom and
 all of us that we have promised
 to "continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
 in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers."
 And that is only ONE of the five promises we make
 at our baptisms (pages 304-305 in the BCP!!) and
 which we renew from time to time during each year.

We lead busy, busy lives nowadays.
 From the sight of the increased traffic
 here in Kootenai County and on towards and into Spokane,
 we find ourselves in the midst
 of lots of folks who have places to go and
 people to see.
 Work requirements and schedules, recreation schedules,
 family needs, health needs:
 trying to balance it all in our 24/7 lives
 can be an exhausting call to us.

Our busyness can distract us easily
 from those things that are really important.
 Our phones, tablets and laptops
 can keep us hooked onto the internet endlessly.
 In all our busyness,
 God often takes a lower place;

God loses some priority...
as was happening in Israel and
as what happened with Martha.

Martha reminds me of a woman in Sandy's and my life
who was always so busy preparing and serving the dinner that
she never sat down at the table with us.
Our fellowship took second place to her serving.
I think of Martha when I think of her.

Jesus reminded Martha to stop a while;
to take some time and
simply rest in God's love and mercy.
We are all called to remove the distractions around us;
to rest and be with Him and
in community.
Once we take some time
to toss our distractions,
then we can truly be
"like a green olive tree in the house of the Lord" –
wholly present with our God,
bursting with fruitfulness and
more fully able to share God's love
in and with the world.
AMEN