**July 21, 2019 Amos 8:1-12**

***A Basket of Summer Fruit***

**Scripture:** Amos 8:1-12 NRSV (1)This is what the Lord GOD showed me--a basket of summer fruit. (2)He said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass them by. (3)The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day," says the Lord GOD; "the dead bodies shall be many, cast out in every place. Be silent!" (4)Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, (5)saying, "When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, (6)buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat." (7)The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. (8)Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who lives in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt? (9)On that day, says the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight. (10)I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day. (11)The time is surely 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. (12)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.

**Notes:**

1. We must ***fulfill*** the great commission of Jesus.
   1. Imagine the fruit ***ripe*** and ***fresh*** from the plant.
   2. Over ***time*** it will begin to show signs of age.
2. Amos is pointing out the ***attitudes*** of the people
   1. Amos speaks to people with no ***respect*** for God.
   2. God was ***angry*** with the Israelites.
3. Many are still ***wandering*** and ***searching***.
   1. Life is meant to be an ***opportunity*** for us.
   2. Life is the ***opportunity*** to do something with our life.
   3. There are many things we could ***work*** to ***change***.
4. The church has been called to make a ***difference***.
   1. There is ***hope*** for us today and the people of the world.
   2. ***Listen*** to the Lord.
   3. A false god will never tell you anything that will make you ***angry*** or ***uncomfortable***.
5. ***Reach*** ***out*** to those who are lost and searching
   1. ***Befriend*** these people
   2. ***Share*** the Love of Jesus
   3. Live our life as an ***example***,
   4. Be ***prepared***.
   5. Be like the ***vibrant*** ***fresh*** fruit hanging on the tree.

**Transcript:**

Growing up is tough and becoming mature is not for the weak. I think of a time when I was finishing college. I was getting ready to launch my career; I was prepared to begin teaching, I only needed to find a job and find my true identity. I know many of you are probably saying you know who you are. I was lost. I was lost as to who I was in relationship with God; and, I was lost to where I belonged in the whole scheme of things. I was seeking; seeking for people who wanted to be a part of my life, and seeking for people who wanted me to be a part of their life. But I was not finding what I was searching for. I was not even sure what I was looking for, but was sure I would know when I found it, and I was not content with where I was in the world. Even after getting a teaching job, even after settling in with where I lived and who I lived with, even after establishing some friendships, I was still unhappy, discontent.

Many people in the world are suffering these same set of feelings. They are looking for something; they are hungry, but they do not know what they are hungry for. They have this great desire for something they cannot name, and they are searching, and not finding what they search for. What we fail to realize is that this is not a problem that is found only with us. It is the same problem our parents may have dealt with, and their parents before them. It is the same desire that has caused countless others to leave their homes and family in search for something they cannot name nor identify. Wandering aimlessly through life in search of the next big thrill. It is the same hunger that caused Adam and Eve to eat from the tree, the tree that held the forbidden fruit; the tree that they had been warned about.

In our passage today, Amos is has another vision. A vision of a basket of summer fruit. Along with it is another prophecy from God for the Israelites. It is not a prophecy of prosperity, but a prophecy of drought. Join me as we read our passage from Amos 8:1-12 .

*(1)This is what the Lord GOD showed me--a basket of summer fruit. (2)He said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass them by. (3)The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day," says the Lord GOD; "the dead bodies shall be many, cast out in every place. Be silent!" (4)Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, (5)saying, "When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, (6)buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat." (7)The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. (8)Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who lives in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt? (9)On that day, says the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight. (10)I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day. (11)The time is surely 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. (12)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.* (Amos 8:1-12 NRSV)

I say this over and over again, We must fulfill the great commission of Jesus. And that is the jist of Amos’ messages; love God and love your neighbors, especially the poor. But in a systematically unjust world, that call must overcome hardened hearts, that call must overcome social evils, ingenious in their escape from simple, suffering truths. Because of this many wander this world searching for something they cannot find. Sometimes God’s call can come simply spoken, however, in worlds of persistent corruption, Amos cannot simply announce the path of justice; so he must prophecy to the people in riddles and puns.

One such pun comes in the form of his vision of the basket of summer fruit. Oh we look at the fruit in our minds and imagine it ripe and fresh from the plant. But if we wait long enough, over time it will begin to show signs of age; spots on the fruit now replace it’s once perfect skin, insects begin hovering over top of the basket in hopes of the feast to come, and if we touch the fruit we find the once firm flesh, is now withered and soft. Decay is eminent.

A once innocent blessing, the land’s ripe produce now shows the signs of doom. For Amos’ listeners, God’s covenant words are no longer there. And listen to Amos’ rhetoric, or should I say sarcasm, *“When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, (6)buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”*

Amos is pointing out the attitudes of the people. They can’t wait for the Sabbath to end so that they can begin to rip off the poor. While they observe the customs, they do so not out of reverence for the law, but because that is what is required of them; yet the entire time they wait all they can do is contemplate how they can make bigger profits and more money, how they can better take advantage of the poor’s inability to resist.

It is obvious that the people of whom Amos speaks, are heartless, greedy people with no respect for God and the Law, and no consideration for those who are oppressed by their financial situation. So Next Amos delivers the message from God, *“I will not forget the deeds of these people. And because of this the land will tremble; Everyone who lives in it will mourn. Your feasts will be turned into mourning, Your songs will be turned into passionate cries of grief. Everybody in the land will be discouraged and in need of relief; People will mourn as one would for the loss of an only son.”*

But the thing that stood out to me is this statement, “*I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, or of a thirst for water*, *But of hearing the words of 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*.

In other words, God was angry enough with the Israelites, that he was done speaking to them. He was done trying to convince them to do the right thing, and he was turning his back to them. His blessing was not going to fall upon them as freely as it once did. His hand of protection was not going to cover them as completely as it once had. Israel was about to be conquered and its people were going to be marched into exile. They were going to be carried off by a foreign power, Captive by a godless dictator. They would be crying out for the mercy of God, but he was going to be slow to respond. They would turn back to the Lord, and he would receive them, but things had changed, the relationship they once had was now different. They would be searching for God, hungering for His mercy and thirsting for his blessing, desiring his presence.

We know there are those who found him, people like: Daniel also called Belteshazzar, Hananiah also called Shadrach, Mishael also called Meshach, and Azariah also called Abednego. Men who would be blessed and found faithful to God. And there would be other prophets, to whom God spoke and used for His purpose: Isaiah, Zechariah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Haggai. But for the majority of the people; the ones who were on the fringes, the ones who were far from God, they would be left wandering and searching. Many are still wandering and searching.

So many people in our day and age wander through life. In their wandering, they are seeking; seeking meaning for the life they live; people who are curious to what the meaning of life may be, people who are not content, people who are not satisfied in where they are in life. People seeking fulfillment; wondering the meaning of life. Trying to find a purpose in their life

What is the meaning of Life? Life has no meaning, the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that everything of this world is meaningless, it is like chasing after the wind. Those seeking some secret transcendental meaning to life are on an endless quest, chasing after the wind. From the North to the East, from sea to sea, running to and fro. So then what is the purpose of living? Our purpose is to worship the Lord, our purpose is to bring glory to the creator of this world, our purpose is to fulfill the will of the father wherever we may be.

Life is meant to be an opportunity for us; an opportunity to restore the relationship with God, the very relationship that was lost when the first man and woman sinned; an opportunity for each of us to live a life giving glory to God. Life is the opportunity for each person who believes, to do something with our life; to fulfilled the Great Commission, to reach out to the world in which we live, to help others restore their relationship with the one and only Living God. Life is an opportunity to make a difference in the world. To strive to make the place where we are, a better and just place. To work to resolve the issues in our society. Joni Eareckson Tada said that gradually, though nobody remembers exactly how it happened, the unthinkable becomes tolerable, and then acceptable, and then legal, and then applaudable

There are plenty of things we could work to change. Just look around you, the older you are the more things that have changed. Do you remember going to visit people? Yes we did that on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and evenings. I remember coming to church on Sunday morning; going to another person’s house for lunch; back to church for the evening service; and then to somebody else’s house after service for dessert. We don’t visit with people near as much as we used to; partly because we are so busy, and partly because we do not want to be intrusive.

Here is one that is a bit more controversial. In the 1965 abortion was banned in all 50 states. In 1973 the supreme court found most abortion laws unconstitutional, so abortions began to be more acceptable. In the last couple of years the political left is pushing to make abortion a right. The political right is pushing to put new legislation into place to ban abortion.

Then there is the ideology of sexual orientation and sexuality. The political left has been pushing the agenda of the LGBTQ communities, they want a person’s sex to be their choice. Yet we know that when a child is born, they are designated as one or the other based on their physical characteristics. You cannot really argue with the physical characteristics of a child; although there are instances where this may be called into question

As I may have implied, those who are lost search for a place where they are comfortable. No matter how distorted or strange their ideas may be, in their plight they find others who buy into the distorted ways and join them. This is how movements start. But these people are lost and misguided; they seek something they cannot find; partly because they refuse to listen to the Living God, and also because they may not have found somebody who can explain God’s plan to them, in a way they can understand.

We also can sympathize with the poor of Amos’ day. The Government seems to becoming more and more corrupt. Special interest groups are influencing legislators to support their agenda, we watch the news and we find the controversy between the right and the left; focused upon the president and his social media statements; focused upon the possibility of impeachment. They say they want to help the poor, but they aren’t focused on the problems that burden the poor, they are focused on party politics. The gap between the rich and the poor is increasing. The poor are left to either deal with it or do without it. Their voice is not being heard. We, the church are the ones who have been called to make a difference; but we cannot make a difference unless we encounter God.

Like that basket of Summer fruit, the harvest has come and gone for the People of Israel. But there is still hope for each of us today and the people of this world. Time and time again we do encounter God, and in these encounters, we are reminded of His love for us. We are reminded that he died so that we may be in a restored relationship. We are urged to turn away from our sin, and serve the risen Jesus. We are instructed to love the Lord with all of our heart, mind, and strength. We are trained to love others as we love ourself. We are encouraged to live in the same manner as Jesus did, following His examples.

We are compelled to share the word of the Lord to others in community; people who do not know, and those who may have known at one time but turned away, people who have been wandering this world from sea to sea, people who have searched from the north to the east, people who are so busy running to and fro that they fail to see the error in their ways, people who have been searching but have not found it.

But before you can share the word of the Lord you must listen to the Lord. You must be living in a way that when the Lord speaks, you are able to hear what he says. I know that sometimes the word of the prophets can be a bit disturbing. But I want you to know that while the images are disturbing, he is speaking to a people who have had ample warnings, they have had plenty of opportunities to make the necessary changes, changes that could have warded off this judgment.

William Willimon wrote: One way you can tell the difference between a true and living God and a dead and fake godis that a false god will never tell you anything that will make you angry or uncomfortable. Are you benefiting from a restored relationship with the Lord? Or do you feel as if you are “…*wandering from sea to sea*, *from north to east*; *running to and fro”*, searching for something you cannot find.

If this sounds like you come to Jesus and ask him to enter into your life. Ask him to forgive your sins, and then take steps to turn away from them. Actively serve the Lord in devotions, worship, and acts of service? Participate in the life of the church. Strive to live according to the example and teaching of Jesus? Initiate the changes you need in your life and initiate the changes you need in your relationship with Jesus. Then you can begin to reach out to those who are lost and searching for something more in their life. Actively seek the lost out; begin a relationship with them. Engage them in conversation; taking time to hear what their need is; and listen to the Lord as to how best meet their needs.

We have this opportunity to work for the Lord. We are called to fulfill our purpose; to worship the Lord, to bring glory to the creator of this world, and fulfill the will of the father wherever we may be. The will of the father is that nobody would be lost, that each person we encounter would have an encounter with God as well. We are the ambassadors. We are the ones who are called and empowered to fulfill this mission. If we see somebody wandering and seeking, what should we do?

We must reach out and befriend these people. Begin a friendship, ( a friendly relationship) with them. If we I am certain there are forces of evil that will. We are their hope.

We must share the Love of Jesus to each and every person who will listen, they may look as if they are not paying attention; but they are listening to the things you say and how you say them. They know if you truly believe what you are saying.

We must live our life as an example of what aa true follower of Christ should be. We can talk the talk until we are blue in the face, but if we don’t walk the walk our words are meaningless

We must be prepared, to meet each person where they are and in the midst of what they are doing; this means knowing the promises of God, knowing the scriptures; know how to receive Jesus into our hearts and how to help somebody else do it as well. We do not want to be like this basket of summer fruit, withering in the heat; we want to be like the vibrant fresh fruit hanging on the tree.