

**Amos 7:12** Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: <sup>13</sup> But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

In order to understand our text for the day, we really need to read the whole book of Amos. So sit back, it is only about 9 chapters long. Okay I will not read it all to you today, but I will try to tell you exactly what happens in this book of prophecy. First let me paraphrase our text: Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, which is a city in Israel, sends a messenger up to Jeroboam, the king of Israel. In his message he basically says, “Hey King, you better watch out for this prophet named Amos. The other day he said that you would be killed and all of Israel dragged away into exile. You better watch out for him.” Now Amaziah could have been patient and waited back for a message from the king, but he had other plans. He would make the king proud; he would rid of this Amos character and save the king and his people a lot of grief. So he went to Amos and said, “Get on out of this city, and for that matter get out of the whole country. We don’t need to hear your words of Judgment. I am sure that your words must be about Judah, not Israel. We are God’s people. Go talk to Judah.” Amos responded something like this, “You think I prophecy because I like it or because it gains me friends? I was happy just being a shepherd. But then God told me to prophecy to you. I am a shepherd; God made me a prophet. I speak his words not mine, so live with them.” But the people responded, “No Prophecy here no more.” You see Amos’s word had slowly tighten a noose around the nation of Israel. They wanted to escape this rebuke from God.

Amos’ prophecy as it is recorded in this book follows a very specific pattern. He begins his prophecy speaking words against nations surrounding Israel. The nations mentions where a who’s-who list of Israel’s enemies. You can almost imagine the people just clamoring to hear

more. They would cheer Amos on, “Yes, that is right, those people are awful, destroy them. Kill them God; they have earned it.” However, in pretty short order, Amos worked his way a little closer to home. He prophesied against Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. But these northern kingdom Israelites had no problem with that either. Those people from Judah were a lot of trouble; no doubt they deserved some harsh words from God. No, Amos could have at Judah. Preach on preacher! Prophecy! But all the cheers dropped suddenly with these words, “Woe to you Israel.” “‘Whoa!’ is right,” the people thought. Sure those other nations they had it coming. Even Judah deserved a little wrath from God. But, Woe to Israel. That just wasn’t what they wanted to hear. In fact they wouldn’t hear it. They ran off to the priest and told him what Amos has said. And that is where we get to our story. The priest agreed, “Woe to everyone but not Israel.” Amos had stepped over the line. He was welcomed to leave. And if he needed help out, it would be given to him.

I can still remember as a kid when my sister and I would do something worthy of punishment. I would stand there before my parents knowing in my heart that I had done nothing wrong. As my parents scolded my sister, I was filled with joy. She had it coming, she started it all. But then my father’s eyes would fix on me. No, not me, I was a perfect angel. But yet the words of rebuke surely followed. I was outraged. I didn’t do anything. Why was I punished?

Do you know that feeling? Do you know the feeling of being sure everyone else needs some rebuke, but confident that you are exempt from such words.

Many times, God’s laws proclaimed the bible slowly tightens around us like a noose as well. Oftentimes when we hear God’s word we are confident initially that we have kept his commands to the tee. When we hear his commands about not crafting idols, we rejoice. Anyone who actually forms something to worship other than God should be rebuked. Those Buddhist

with there statues, those Native Americans with their totem poles, those people need a word of rebuke, Muslim traveling thousands of miles to Mecca just to kiss a statue. But when we hear Jesus tells us that whatever gets the greatest part of our attention and devotion is our false God, we want to say to the God, prophesy here no more. I know I don't spend much time in God's word. I know I rarely pray. I know I have made many excuses about why I can't come for an hour of bible study before church. I know I spend a lot more time around the TV than God's word. I know football season is more important than Easter Season. But don't prophecy here God.

When we here that we should not murder, we rejoice again. Hang those terrorist! Electrocute those serial killers! Sadam and Osama must die for what they have done. But when Jesus tells us that hate, even a simple hateful word to our brother, is just as good as murder, we are ready for the prophecy to stop. We rise to our defenses. After all, that person really upset me. My wife never acts like I want her too. My parents just don't understand. My anger was necessary. Your anger was sin Jesus says. The noose tightens.

Jesus says, do not steal! Of course not, those executives at Enron should be punished. Those bank robbers must be brought to justice! Those who scam our senior citizens should be locked up for good. But when we realize that overcharging someone just because we can is stealing, we start to squirm. It is not my fault they didn't know how much it was worth. When God reveals to us that copying a few copyrighted videos or CDs or computer software is worthy of death, we jump to our defenses. Those people make so much money, they don't need mine. "It is sin," Jesus rebukes. And the noose tightens. Prophecy here no more we say.

We are great at pointing out others sins, and at times just as good at ignoring or justifying our own. But Jesus today says, "Remove the plank in your own eye before you go around

looking for specks in other's eyes." The answer is not for the word of God to be silent. The word reveals the plank. But once revealed, it must be removed.

How is the plank removed? By Jesus himself. He removes the plank with two of his own, two planks that were crossed together on Calvary. When we stop justifying our sin and start confessing it, Jesus removes it from our lives. He takes those planks from our eyes and nails them to his own cross. He forgives our sins, and restores us to our place in his kingdom. He reminds us that just as he rose from the dead, we too rose to newness of life on the day of our baptisms. We no longer need to be bound to those things we once tried to justify.

The answer today is not to say "Do not prophecy here any more God." Rather we hear his word, confess and are forgiven. And being forgiven, we live as his children. If God were silent, we would die in our sin. But thanks be to God that through his word proclaimed by his servants he reveals our sins that he might forgive them. We open ourselves to God's examination trusting in his mercy. Prophecy away Lord! But follow quickly with your love and forgiveness. Follow today with your supper to feed me your forgiveness. Amen.