
Meditation on Amos 8:1-12

'Living in a Bitter Day - Seeing with Amos's Eyes'

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [Phil 1,2] Amen.

::: ONE :::

My dear sisters and brothers,

We have been called to worship today with three questions, responded by three answers:

Prophets, what do you see?

We see the many ways
we distract ourselves.

What else do you see?

We see the good and the bad fruits
we have produced.

What do you see today?

We witness and worship God today,
grateful for love and forgiveness.

...

Amos was asked the first same question:

‘What do you see, Amos?’

And his answer was:

‘A basket of ripe fruit,’

Followed by the explanation of the vision

Then the LORD said to me,

“The time is ripe for my people Israel;

I will spare them no longer.

It is a play on word, as the Hebrew word for
“fruit” (רֵיזָן)...

... is almost the same as the word for “end” (אֵדָה).
The time has come to an end for my people of Is-
rael.

∴ TWO ∴

*So, seeing the time he lived in through Amos’s
eyes really gives you the idea of living in bitter
days.*

The bitterness thereby is not something fatal
which comes falling onto the people out of the
blue.

The bitterness of Amos days is the sheer injustice and inequity which those in power inflict on those who are I need, those who don't have a voice, those who are defenceless.

::: THREE :::

God asks Amos: What do you see?
And Amos vision is a basket full of ripe summer fruit.

Now I only had a basket with a few nice and sweet apples with me.

Amos will have seen a basket full of peaches, melons, grapes, plums and more.

It must have looked beautiful, rich, mouthwatering, delicious...

But Gods vision goes beyond the obvious. He already sees the rotting fruit.

From a mile away everything could look nice. A society in prosperity. A people worshipping a God of the favoured.

But in the close up, through Amos eyes, led by Gods vision beyond the obvious, you see...

... people who cannot wait to increase their wealth on the back of the poor,

... people who want the Sabbath to end in order to pick up on to their unjust trading,

... people who even trade in other human beings as if they were a commodity.

::: FOUR :::

Now our sight is drawn to something absolutely remarkable:

God, the Lord swears by himself that he will set an end to this injustice and inequity.

God has proofed himself as the creator which has set up a good order to his creation.

But the injustice of the people leads to state in which the earth is shaken like in a massive earthquake. Inequity leads to a situation where everything is swept away like in a major flooding.

And in the end, everyone will suffer. Injustice and inequity lead to calamity for everyone.

When God swears by himself, that he is the God of justice and equity. He steadfastly states that his creation was built on justice and equity.

It does not mean that there might be differences between people. But as soon as the differences lead to suffering of the least favoured, it is the beginning of injustice.

∴ FIVE ∴

And then we read:

*11 “The days are coming,”
declares the Sovereign LORD,
“when I will send a famine through the land—
not a famine of food or a thirst for water,
but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.*

*12 People will stagger from sea to sea
and wander from north to east,
searching for the word of the LORD,
but they will not find it.*

In a dispute between Amos, King Jerobeam of Israel and the priest of Bet-El Amaziah, Amos had been asked to stop prophesying and to leave the country. Which Amos didn't do.

Now, here a situation is depicted in which exactly this has occurred.

When everything still seemed to go well, God's true word was nothing that was of relevance.

Now in a situation of grief and despair, people are desperately looking for God's word – which they themselves have abandoned.

What a terrible situation this must be.

What a terrible situation if you desperately long for a word of comfort and hope by your God – but there is none.

::: SIX :::

So, my dear sisters and brothers,
back to those questions:

Prophets, what do you see?

We see the many ways we distract ourselves.

Yes, that might be the case. But – we are called to be prophets. We are called to be prophets in our society.

We might be suffering from injustice...

We might let injustice happen to others...

We might even be inflicting injustice on others...

However, we are called not to look away, not to stay silent.

If you suffer injustice,
become a prophet in naming it.

If you let it happen,
become a prophet in supporting those suffering
and raise awareness with those causing injustice.

If you are causing injustice,
become a prophet in changing the causes of in-
justice and therefore become an example for oth-
ers.

What else do you see?

*We see the good and the bad fruits
we have produced.*

Yes, we need to be aware.

And, I assume that very often we ourselves might
have a role in all of the three fields of play.

No one will only be the sufferer, only be the one
just letting it happen, only be the one causing.

Let us be aware. That is God's call to us.

∴ SEVEN ∴

And then:

What do you see today?

We witness and worship God today,
grateful for love and forgiveness.

God's word to his people is a word of love and forgiveness.

Amos spoke about a time where God's love could not be found. What a terrible time, what a terrible way of having to live.

Today, we are called to be prophets of God, speaking the word of love and forgiveness to all who are hungry for God's word.

So, let this place, this community, this church always be a place where people will find God's word of love and forgiveness.

Let this place, this community, this church always be a place where people will find comfort and compassion.

Let this place, this community, this church always be a place where people will find the peace of God – peace for our hearts and souls.

Amen.