

Worship at Work

*Then the Lord said,
"Behold, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them; (Amos 7:8)*

Big Idea:

In these five visions, Amos demonstrates that the Israelites had refused to live worshipfully in three areas: their vocations, their avocations, and in church. Why were they unfaithful in all these areas? Because they had neglected to listen to God's Word in each area. The ultimate judgment for such neglect is when God removes the Word and gives rebels what they want (8:11-12). The only hope is to return to Christ who is the "plumb line" and delighted to do the "work" his Father gave him, who "lived" among us, and who "sings" in our worship.

I. Mission (Amos 7:1-3)

The first vision reminds us of the horrific locust plague that was literally sent on Israel as a result of Joel's prophecy. Though the locusts are metaphorical in Amos' vision, the destruction promised is not. Amos plead for mercy on Israel in response to this vision because it would have wiped out God's people which was the line through which the Messiah would come. If God followed through with his threat not only would there be no Jews but more tragically, no Savior. But the question that must arrest our attention for personal application is, Why did God threaten their crops? Often the focus of a particular judgment reveals the area of life in which the rebellion occurred. In this case, it was their vocation. In the Israelites' vocations, they refused to listen to the voice of God. Their selfish extortion of their poor laborers, their crooked business deals and inflationary prices, and their generally indulgent laziness generally demonstrate that they paid no attention to God's directions for how we work.

II. Mercy (Amos 8:1-6)

Scripture is full of guidance and instructions for how we should work. Amy Sherman has been a tremendous help to the church with her book *Kingdom Calling*. In it, she describes four different "pathways" for working in a way that is in keeping with God's mission and extends mercy to those around us.

1. Bloom where you're planted: The most obvious place to put into practice the characteristics of the Kingdom of God outlined in the Bible is where you currently work. Simple Kingdom priorities can get the world's attention because they are often counter-cultural and "not the way things are done in the real world."
2. Donate your skills: Through training, education, and experience, each of us has skills we can use to benefit others. It could be volunteering medicals skills in underserved areas, tutoring kids who are behind in school, teaching financial skills, or helping repair a house or a car. Whatever it is, God calls us to be good stewards of the skills he has given us by donating them to serve others.
3. Launch your own social enterprise: Many of our mission partners do this as a way to serve the people they are ministering to both in word and deed.
4. Participate in your church's targeted initiative: Our church has many mission partners, each of which welcomes volunteers to help in their work.

God made us work not as a result of the Fall, but in order to dignify us as image bearers and include us in the joy of his redemptive activity.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you more consciously live “coram deo” in your everyday life?
2. Which of the pathways listed could you follow to participate in God’s mission of mercy in the world?