

Advent Devotional December 7, 2021

Scripture

Amos 7:10-17

10 Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'" 12 And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; 13 but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." 14 Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, 15 and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' 16 Now therefore hear the word of the LORD. You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.' 17 Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be parceled out by line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.'"

Devotional

Judy Zimmerman Herr '82

In the midst of the prophet Amos's thundering calls for justice comes a scene from his life. Amos's conversation with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, is a classic confrontation between the establishment and the prophet, the insider and the protester. And as can be expected, the priest tells Amos to be quiet. Amos comes from the other kingdom, Judah, and he should take his message home and stop bothering Israel.

"But," says Amos, "I have no choice! I'm not a prophet, a professional who does this for a living. No, I'm really just a farmer. But God has put these words in my mouth and sent me to you."

We live in a world that would look familiar to Amos: a world in which many have little and a few have more than they need, a world in which power protects itself and cares little or nothing for equity and right, a world in which even God's people do not always live by God's word.

Who are you in this story? Being a prophet is not a choice so much as a compulsion to speak, a fire in the belly, a push from God. Do you see wrongs about which you cannot remain silent? Or are you part of the establishment—one of those being called to account by prophets marching through the streets proclaiming a message the dominant culture doesn't want to hear?

How is God pushing you to act? Where is God sending you—maybe out of your comfort zone—with words that must be heard? Or who is God bringing into your life with uncomfortable words that call you to change or that warn you of judgment to come?

In this Advent season of waiting, may we be open to hearing God's call to us.

Prayer

Our God, your call to us is not always comfortable or easy. Help us to know when we need to speak and when we need to receive words of judgment. Make us open to being channels of your healing and hope to our world. Amen.