



St. Luke's East Hampton

Sermon Preached by the Rev. Benjamin Shambaugh

July 20, 2025; Proper 11 C: Amos 8:1-12, Psalm 52, Luke 10:38-42

Today's reading from the Hebrew Scriptures continues our journey with the Prophet Amos. Last Sunday, Amos shared the metaphor of a plumb line. This morning, he receives a vision of a basket of summer fruit. When I picture a basket of summer fruit, I get an image of strawberries, blueberries, peaches or cherries made up into pies with a little ice cream or whipped cream on top. As a farmer, Amos saw something completely different. He knew that the appearance of summer fruit meant that the summer season was almost over. (Think of the ripening of peach plums, the coming of rose hips, or apples that start to turn red.) For this self-proclaimed farmer and “hewer of sycamore trees,” (Amos 7:14) the end of summer was a time for clearing out the deadwood and unproducing branches and otherwise doing what needed to be done to make sure that next year's harvest would be good. As his words make clear, Amos saw the basket of summer fruit as a sign that God's pruning was about to begin. Amos saw the problems in front of him. He knew that them in the present would lead to a better future... and that not fixing them would be disastrous. He condemned those who cheated the poor by falsifying their weights and balances, charging exorbitant prices for inferior goods, and got rich on the backs of others. He was most harsh with people who claimed to be following God but behaved in ungodly ways. Amos challenged people to live lives that matched their values: to love their neighbors, to follow just business practices, care for the poor, help those in need, and to respect the dignity of those around them. (In a few minutes we will renew the baptismal covenant in which we promise to do these things ourselves.) Because of the small size of his writing, Amos is sometimes called one of the minor or lesser prophets. His message, however, was not minor at all. Like Hosea, Micah and the other so-called lesser prophets, Amos had a major goal: to get people's actions back in line with their faith and with the love and justice of God, thereby bringing their lives and their world back to the way God created them to be..

As I have mentioned before, I do not choose the readings assigned for Sundays. I do, however, strive to connect them to the issues of our day. Today, I leave this to you. Our readings from Amos and Psalm 52 speak well for themselves. In looking at them, remember that Amos was not some sort of political operative or even a particularly religious person. Amos was a reluctant prophet whose actions only came after a personal encounter with God. He was a farmer, a regular guy who experienced God in the fields and through interactions with his friends. His positions came as a result of listening to God and applying what he heard to what he saw happening around him. Amos spoke the word of God after spending time in the presence of God. In this morning's gospel, we see Mary trying to do the same thing.

It's hard to believe but summer is already half over. Along with that basket of summer fruit, the story of Mary and Martha tells us to slow down and enjoy the sun and the sand and time

with friends and family while it's still here. You know the story. Martha is running around doing everything and gets upset with Mary who is sitting still. Most of us are Marthas. We have a hard time slowing down. We don't take the vacation we are due. We not only always find more that needs to be done, we get annoyed with people who seem to be doing nothing. Summer weather combines with the gospel to tell us that this Martha-like behavior isn't healthy and that a little down time might be a better idea. This is important but there is a deeper message for us to consider. Mary was not spending time on vacation. Mary was spending time with Jesus. To get back to our agricultural metaphor, we can't bear fruit or be the fruit unless we are connected to the vine. (John 15:5) We can't love unless we are connected to the source of that love. We can't fight for justice unless we are connected to the source of that justice. If we are to be like Jesus, live Jesus, and love like Jesus, we need to connect to him.

This morning's baptism gives us a special opportunity to do that. Go-go, the young girl being baptized today, is 11 years old. Unlike the many babies we have baptized earlier this summer, she is old enough to know what is going on, to understand the promises being made, and to want to take them on for herself. She recognizes that fulfilling her baptismal covenant means that, like Amos, there will be times when she will need to take a stand on the side of justice as well as love and dignity as well as compassion. There will be times when she will need to demonstrate her faith by saying something - and times she will need to do that by saying nothing at all but living it out instead. There will be times that she will struggle and make mistakes and need to seek forgiveness and look for healing and hope for herself. What is wonderful about all this is that she is not in this alone. There is a moment in the service when I ask the entire congregation, will all you do to support this person in her life in Christ. By saying, "We will" we are promising to be with her every step of the way. You might notice that all of us are renewing our baptismal vows with her. By saying "We will," we are proclaiming that none of us are doing this alone, that we are all here for one another - and that God is with us as well. Knowing that, she - and we - can have the courage to go out in the world and do what needs to be done.

The Lord GOD showed me a basket of summer fruit. He said, 'Amos, what do you see?' I said, 'A basket of summer fruit.' The message is clear. The time for action is here.