

Calvary United Methodist Church
July 14, 2019

MEASURE UP!
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

Children's Message:

Amos 7:8

We call the children up at this time for the children's message. Would the children like to come up? Welcome!

Well, today I want to talk a little bit about a guy named Amos. Amos was a man who had a call from God to go do something. Have you ever had a call from your parents to go do something? Go clean up your room or do something. Well, Amos was getting a call from God that said: I want you to go to tell people to change their life, to follow me. That's a pretty big call to get from God, isn't it? To ask other people to change their lives. I want you to hear this story:

The Lord asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied. Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people of Israel. I will spare them no longer."

How many of you know what a plumb line is? Any idea? Anyone out there know what it is? Aha! So, we have a few people who know what a plumb line is. This is a plumb line. Now, that's not a kind of plumb that you eat, is it? It would probably be hard on your teeth. Any idea what you...now, it's not "you are getting sleepy" either because I know you are anyway. No matter what you can do if there is a weight, this could be just as easy as a rock, but this is a fancy plumb line.

When people were building years ago they didn't have fancy lasers and levels, they had a plumb line because if I am laying a brick wall up here for a house, do you want your wall to lean? Why don't you want it to lean? (Child speaks.) Well, there is something that I don't understand in this world. It's dealing with physics and all those professional things. This is actually a level. We level things, right? Do you want your house to be level? Because if not and your rooms were like this instead of a floor like this, what would happen? (Child speaks.) Stuff would just fall all over the place.

Before they had levels they had plumb lines to make a straight line and so if it is this way if it's a level; if it's this way it's really not a level anymore it is a plumb to make sure the wall is straight because if it weren't it can lead to a lot of problems. Can I put that under there again? Thank you.

And there are so many things that God wanted him to tell the people to get their life straight. He was holding it up not just about people; he wanted a whole nation, it would be like a call to America: I want you to get your lives straight again. It's this plumb thing. And you can see

here, the lights are better up here in the front, can you see that? It's how to keep a wall straight, to make sure your bricks on your house look good. Today we use lasers to do the same thing because you don't really bend that thing.

But I am sure there are other ways you measure and keep your life together. Have your parents ever said you don't measure up? I hope not. Has anyone ever told you you don't measure up? Oh, yes. As adults we've heard that a few times in life. But there are ways we measure. Have you ever used a yard stick or a ruler? This isn't a yard stick, it's a measuring tape. It shows me some lengths of things and it is a way to make sure that you can be accurate on things.

So we use tapes, we use levels, but in God's house the thing that we do to keep us measured up is the Bible, the Bible. It's a book about living, about doing the right thing before God. It teaches us above all there are two big rules: To love God and love others, our neighbors. And if we do that, you wouldn't think of hurting anybody; you wouldn't think of cheating anybody; you wouldn't think of stealing; you wouldn't think of doing harm because you want to do the right thing.

Actually if you think of the right thing, it is not just what we don't do, it is what we do. For instance if you see someone who is hungry, what would be the right thing to do? If you see someone without a coat or anything and it is wintertime what would you do? If you see someone walking and they don't have any shoes...you already know the rules! You are pretty smart. You see, God's rule book isn't that hard.

Did you ever have a day like this when you felt very angry? Yeah. I don't know, when I was young I would get that look and my father or mother might say: Straighten up! Did you ever hear that word? I know some of you do; I've been around you. And they say: straighten up! What do they mean by that? Do you know what to do when they say straighten up? What does that mean? (Child speaks.) Calm down; quit running around the house doing what you aren't supposed to do.

Okay, there is a whole part of that. When my dad would say straighten up he could have meant, someone said in the first service, straighten up your room. You have to straighten up, clean up, it's a mess, right? Or straighten up might mean quit acting around or acting crazy because we have to go somewhere. I want you to get dressed and get things done and we don't have time for goofing off, that sort of crazy. So, it's an important thing to do.

When we have these talks, do you like talks like this? Sometimes they are not a lot of fun, but they are typically not trouble, they are teaching moments and that's what this thing was when God talked to Amos. "I want to teach you, I want to teach the people you talk to. I want to talk to the people of Israel to straighten up." Your parents don't want you to be in trouble. They want you to guide your life so it's correct.

Now, rules, sometimes we think rules are bad, but rules are both positive. There are rules in what we are not allowed to do. We talked about this just a couple of weeks ago: don't jump on the bed, don't throw a ball in the house, don't run in the house. But there are ruled: clean your room, do your homework, right?

Rules are there to make up safe. They are for our protection. They are to help build us up and make us better people. Do you believe that? Yeah. They are really there to make us better. There are even rules for adults, right? Highway rules: how fast you drive, where you drive, where you can turn. There are all kinds of rules: Paying your bills, you know. And there are consequences. If you don't listen to mom and dad there are probably consequences, right? Do you know what consequence means? If you don't do this, there is going to be trouble: you won't be going somewhere or something is going to happen.

But the real reason for the directions from God and he was looking at the people and the real reason your parents try to bring correction to your life is because God and your parents love you and the real reason God says that to all of us as adults: God loves us.

If we follow God's plan, things usually go very well. That doesn't mean there won't be problems, but if we don't follow God's plan, it can lead to a lot of trouble. So the whole thing is to follow God's plan and we do that by prayer and study and reading.

But of all the things you should know from the Bible, I love this: God loves you, He always has and always will. God's love will never change because Jesus loves you and He teaches us to love God and to love others.

So, when someone says to you about straightening up, I want you to always think of this thing. It's called a what? (Child speaks.) You got it! It's a plumb line and you can't see, even if I hold it here it's a straight line. If you have something heavy, even a rock on the end of this string, when it comes down it will be straight. So, I can check this wall...and God says, I'm looking at you to see if your life is straight and he is looking at everybody out there to see if your life is the way it ought to be.

And the best way for that is when we love God and we love others. So I pray you will have a blessed week, that you will learn to love God and others and that you will be obedient to your parents as well.

I want to give everyone one of these fruit snacks before you head back today and God bless you on your way. Thank you for coming up this week and I pray you have a great week.

Message:

Amos 7:7-17

It's a harsh word! Measure up! I've heard that a few times in life, and I've been told: You don't measure up. Some of you have felt that of life as well, in relationships and family and comparisons, in sports and I activities and music, whatever it's in, somebody always has

something that they are comparing us with someone else and this prophet like a lot of other prophets, they weren't comparing an individual to someone. He is saying: I'm comparing your life with the way it ought to be.

God has set before you the way of life, if you choose it, it will be good. He always said: I choose before you life or death. You choose life, but even today we often choose the wrong one. And when we head down that path, when we don't stand firm we end up hearing a speech from someone like Amos whose word is just as much truth today as it was then. God is holding the plumb up and he's looking at you and He's looking at me and He's looking at America and He's looking at every nation on earth and saying: Are you living right? Are you plumb before God? This man had to stand before people as a sheep herder and a man who took care of the sick. And he said: God's telling me this. You change. And here's what God's words were always or. Now, some of you are old enough to have heard that from your parents. Some of your parents: You clean your room or...

Police say that: you slow down or... Right? There will be consequences.

Folks, you and I are enjoying the consequences of our lack of being plumb with God. When we make bad decisions, and most of us know it even before we make them. I make plenty of them by mistake. What happens when we knowingly choose to walk against God, not loving as we ought: not loving God and not loving others? And not doing as we ought to do has a social consequence that is breaking up nations. He held it out not for just an individual. He said: I'm looking over this nation of Israel and they will go in exile and they are going to be...if we get into it heavy enough, destruction coming your way.

I don't know about you, I've had a lot of destruction in my life because of bad mistakes, bad judgements on my side, bad calls. You have done it too. And I think the world around us is suffering now because we have gone so far from God. We don't even know what true and plumb is anymore. The Word of God gives a lot of directions about loving our neighbors and loving others and caring for our family and caring for the widow and the orphan and, yes, the immigrants among us and all those lists that go on and on and on.

You see, when we don't do that, we have problems. There is a word that the church is so not familiar with anymore. It is called repent. You turn from sinful ways to God's ways. How many times my parents warned me about don't do this? I have a heavy foot. Do you know what that means? And I had a ticket one time and I shared with my family and the next week we were going to my pastor's 25th wedding anniversary in Lewisburg and my parents came home through that little town of Beaver Springs that goes 55-45-35 and they said they went through the town ahead of me and they saw the police had a place set up to check. And they said they knew we should have turned around. And when I got home I said: Guess what? Two weeks in a row. I'm lucky!

See, there is a consequence for not obeying. Paying a price is pretty easy for a fine. When you hit someone going through a slow zone in a town and you have to live with the death the

rest of your life...that's not so easy.

You see, in our life God places before us what is right and what is wrong and it is time for change. It is time for repentance. And when I think of repentance, sometimes you think: well, what year did you give yourself to Jesus. It's wonderful if you can remember that, but I speak of repentance as a daily activity, morning, noon and night. You get up in the morning and you are starting off with a bad attitude: Lord, forgive me. I have a home, I have a shelter, I have clothing, and I have a job. And you go through the day and you start complaining: Lord, forgive me again. And sometimes it is what I think, sometimes it is what I do. Sometimes at the end of the day and I forgot to do something, it is again saying: Forgive me, Lord, and maybe I have to call someone else and say: Forgive me.

It is time to change. It is time for us daily to understand, for us to constantly be on the way to new life. I have to throw the old of living my way, my terms, away to say everyday: Lord, I desire for you to fill my life that I would live an obedient life for you. I am throwing my old one away where it is I'll do what I want anytime I want, and don't you tell me different. There is a lot of that out there now days, right?

To live for God means every day I am conscious, I am thinking from the time I get up. It's not a guilt. I don't want us to live in guilt, that is a no winner. I want us to live with thanksgiving and praise for the God who has given us life, the God who wants us to have a life of fulfillment, of joy and peace and you know when you walk in God's ways you will have a peace that says in scriptures, that will pass all understanding because even when we have the rough problems we know we are doing what we ought to do.

God wants us to know that today is a day of new beginnings. That is every day, every moment of every day. No matter where you have been, no matter what you have done, today is a day to throw off the chains to throw off the shackles of things you think you can't do. The brokenness of relationships and sometimes the relationships that need broken because they are unhealthy, they are constraining us to be all we can be for God. The brokenness that we allow in our life and think we somehow have to stay in this misery. God says: I want more for you. I want a life of fulfillment.

I started looking at this construction stuff when I think of the plumb line and I thought of this. As a kid I thought it was the House of Pizza. It's not really. It is House of Pisa. I don't know that I would want to stand on the back side of that. I have read a few stories on it. The foundation that got higher and higher. It wasn't solid rock. And what happens? It sinks. It is not plumb.

When I worked in construction we used plumb lines all the times in those days to make things, to start from the very square of the foundation whatever it was. If you don't have a firm foundation, everything else is going to go wrong.

I travel in some of the more impoverished lands where they don't have all the wonderful tools and sometimes they don't even use the plumb, and so you get a second floor and if the next floor starts and the walls are just out a half inch and the third floor is another half inch and the fourth floor is a half inch. I was in an airport the other year and there was about a 5 story building and it had just fallen over. It wasn't being destroyed, it was under construction.

We sing a lot of songs about that, you know, about having a firm foundation. Remember earthquakes in California a couple of weeks ago? About a decade or so ago too or more in the 90s I guess that was. Wow! Time flies! And Haiti.

Anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is like a wise person who builds his house on solid rock.

If we want to be the people who live in repentance, that means we decide: Lord, the rest of my life I choose to put my anchors, I choose to put on the foundation of Jesus Christ. We sing it: Christ our Solid Rock; How Firm a Foundation; Christ our Cornerstone; Rock of Ages. And yet we try to build it on our terms and wonder why sometimes our lives are a little shaky.

Our children and our families and our friends and our world needs more. They can't get it for a little bit here on a Sunday morning. It's when you and I live it, every day, and people want what you have.

I heard a new word this week: influencer. I thought what's an influencer? It's these people who get on the news or Instagram and all those things and they mention the name of some star who I've never even heard of, I'm really not with it. And they made a million and a half last year. They didn't sell anything, they didn't do anything, they just stand there and look pretty and tell everyone: buy this shirt. It's the best thing out there. But because people know that they have such great influence, they pay them.

Folks, you are not paid but you are influencers. You are influencers. People are watching you: children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors. We are influencers for Jesus Christ. You and I can build this kingdom and it ought to be a market that is unstoppable.

Everybody wants to change the world, but nobody wants to change. Did you ever think about how much change you want in your life? We only like it when we want to do it and yet all of us pretty much know there is some place for change in our life and correction, but it doesn't come easy.

I never like it when teachers and, you know, coaches, band directors and other people wanted to tell me what I was doing wrong. Sometimes it won't make you look foolish, but you always think you are right, don't you? Or I am I the only one that way? You think your way is

right. And now day as we get older, when people try to correct us, we expect our children to listen to it. As adults, boy it doesn't go down real easy when someone corrects us. And yet, God is standing before us with the plumb line. He is looking upon all of us, every one of us: Is it time for correction?

How are you when it comes to standing with God? Because when we think we don't have a problem, he says the wage of sin is death? That would be a dream if it was just over, wouldn't it? The wage of sin is a lot worse than death. It is destruction of our families and our friends and our relationships. It's the demise of everything around us because when we are not on God's path, we are typically on a path that is going down the drain.

Death is a lot easier than dealing with daily struggles because we choose to live our way versus God's way. This man called Amos was being accused by these people of doing stuff he didn't do and he says: I'm just trying to save you because God wants you to pull your life back. God has never wanted to destroy.

Remember Jonah was supposed to go to Nineveh, but he wanted to Tarshis instead because he didn't want to save those people. But when he finally told them you need to get your life straight, guess what? Forty days they repented, put on sack cloth and said, "God, we are sorry." And it said what? God spared their nation.

God doesn't want to harm us. God wants us to see that when we follow God our life will be good. And so when He was holding that plumb line across Israel He said: I don't want to bring destruction in your land. I don't want to bring destruction on America. You are doing it yourself! How about that? We are wrecking our lives because we choose to live earthly lives rather than get our idea on God.

Are you very good at bad decisions? I'm not showing you my list. But I bet you have your own, right? Remember when we would scream and yell and our parents would want to correct us from time to time. What happens is for most of us adults we get to this point that we don't think we have to answer to anyone. And in the midst of that, this is this man Amos saying: You are answering to God this day. Make a choice. It's God's way or it's trouble.

Some years ago there was a movie put out by Jurassic Park. Some of you probably saw this. These people find these eggs, they did all the work scientifically, they hatched them, they built this little park thinking you could keep in a T-Rex. Sure. Well, you know, you have a good idea and it gets out of hand and brings destruction and they saw their people devoured right in front of them and saw life disappear.

You want a good idea? Follow God and if you don't, guess what? It can bring us to tears, can't it? The relationships that are broken, the sicknesses that are unnecessary, the waywardness, the abuse, the children. When I look at our land and I look, I wonder, is there anything bad we haven't discovered yet? Do you ever get to that point? It always looks so more ap-

peeling and it takes us where?

God gives us warnings all the time. Health things that we know we ought to do that we don't do. Things that we know will damage us if we do them and we do them anyway. I think I'll hook on a bungee cord and jump off a 500 foot bridge and see how that goes today. I think I'll go out and...you've done some of these. It's icy out today. I wonder if I can do a few donuts with my car on the ice? Luckily it was my sister's. Have you done stuff like that? We put God to the test and we live with anxiety and depression and fears and sickness and all the times we look at the problems in our nation and we say: Well, what can I do about it? I can do nothing. It's too much and no one is going to tell me how to live my life.

We sit back like little Kermit: Not my problem. I love that. And you know what? It is. Any of you ever complain about tax dollars? You know what it's a problem? We are praying for the problems of the world, especially in America. Do you know what else is the problem? Burying our children and grandchildren because of the drug epidemic, alcohol problems and health issues related to it and obesity and all these things. You know what else are the problems? It's not my problem.

Let me tell you: the plumb line is up. It's my problem; it's your problems too. We can't complain about the world if we are not living as the light of Jesus Christ. Either we are the light, or we aren't.

Amos said this: Fire devours nations, battles will erupt, earthquakes will crumble cities, hunger, famine, thirst from drought, plagues...Whew, as I said a moment ago, quick death looks better than some of the stuff we've seen.

I've seen horrid things in this world. I listen to horrid things and think how much more can we hurt when we know the answer and we choose not to obey. It took prayer, it took a look at the plumb line, it took a moment for Amos to open his eyes and say: This is a wakeup call and it is for us today. It's a wakeup call, not just for America. I can't change America. I can only change me. And only you can change you. This isn't a game we are in. It's the Kingdom of God. Either we are here to bring the Kingdom or why are we here? Are we just meeting here weekly for something to do? We are here as a light, as a testimony. God says: Choose hot or cold, I don't want anything in between. I want you to live for me. I want you to get rid of this crystal ball notion of what is going on out there and understand what prophecy is.

When Amos went: prophecy is not just the result of seeing the future. He wasn't saying this is going to happen way out there. It is a faithful declaration of the implications of current actions on the future and the hope of having an impact on both.

I get a lot of little clips from time to time on Facebook. I don't need to see anymore the dangers of plastic and all the animals whose lives are destroyed and yet every grocery store and

place we go they are saying: plastic. I'm thinking: why do we still have it? That's a pretty minor thing compared to all the other political things. We see our families falling apart. Are we doing anything about it? We see the problems with drug and alcohol and the illegal activities here and there and we can say: It's not just predicting what's coming. It's happening right now before our eyes in our families and for many of us in our homes. It's plenty deep in my own family.

Do you choose, do I choose, to be Christ? Because God's heart is breaking and our hearts are breaking in this broken world and God says: I have something better. It's the Word of God. It's the restoration that will come when we choose, I choose to live for Christ. I choose to be light for Christ. I choose to not keep it but take it and give it away and be the healing hands of Jesus Christ.

Proverbs: He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that taketh the city.

Of all the things that you and I need today, it's a prayer that God's Spirit will enter us and live fully through us. But it only takes when it starts with: Lord, I'm not on the walk. Cleanse me, constantly, morning, noon and night, I repent. I'm getting rid of who I am that I can have more room for you, God, in my heart.

God wants to give us the prescription for total restoration of our lives. When we restore our life to walk with God it will restore those around us and it will slowly get into our communities and into our schools and into our nation and into the world. God weeps when He sees the brokenness in our lives today. God wants restoration. The prescription is coming to Jesus Christ and living for him.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to come home, not just today but every day. Receive us, forgive us of our sins, cleanse us from all unrighteousness and place within our hearts a desire to live daily for you. We ask in your Holy Name. Amen.