Bible Study
Proper 10, Year C
July 10, 2016

[RCL] Amos 7:7-17; Psalm 82; Colossians 6:1-14; Luke 10:25-37

Amos 7:7-17
According to Webster's Dictionary, a plumb line is "a tool used to see if something is perfectly vertical." In the beginning of this reading, Amos has a vision that God is setting a plumb line in the midst of the people of Israel and that the "sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste" as a result of the ways in which the Israelites are falling away from God. Amos is delivering a strong message to the people that they must realign themselves with God's purposes. Seeing an opportunity to challenge Amos's authority, Amaziah sends a message to the King of Israel that Amos, acting as a prophet, is conspiring against the king and threatening death to the king and the kingdom. Amos denies any self-interest at work, responding that he is no prophet, just a regular person called by God to carry this message. He clearly rests his authority in God, not in his birthright or biography.

- Through Amos, God is calling upon the people of Israel to address the injustices around them. How do you believe God is calling us now to stand against injustice?
- Amos is an ordinary person set on an extraordinary path. Have you felt this way or been in ministry with someone who was clearly called by God to work to repair injustices? Do you see any prophets like Amos at work in the world right now?

Psalm 82
Psalm 82's brevity belies its power. In just a few short verses the writer of this profound text establishes God's complete authority, calls out the injustices being perpetrated on the weak and poor, and names God's wrath: that the wicked will "die like mortals and fall like any prince" and God will continue to rule the earth. In the rhythm of this psalm, we see God's power and authority named, exercised, and established.

- Do you see this kind of rhythm in injustices you have witnessed?
- Do you believe this rhythm and outcome is possible in the face of injustices perpetrated in the world today?

Colossians 1:1-14
In this beginning of Paul's letter to the Colossians, he prays that the community "may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, *so that* you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God." Of course, Paul is not talking about book-knowledge. He is speaking to a deeper, transformative knowing of God, rooted in the story of Jesus, and communicated through the stories of Israel. He is using language, references, and allusions that this community would understand to help them stay firmly rooted in their faith.

- Paul wants to support the Colossians in leading lives worthy of God. What does 'leading a life worthy of the Lord' mean to you?
- What stories, from Scripture or otherwise, help you stay rooted in your faith?

Luke 10:25-37

You may be surprised to find out that the parable of the Good Samaritan is prompted by a dialogue between Jesus and a lawyer. But this contrast is key to understanding the parable at its deepest level. We are all familiar with this story about the priest and Levite who passed by the beaten man and the Samaritan, generally despised by the Israelites, who stopped to help. But imagine the heresy for the listeners at the time when Jesus tells this pious lawyer to go and act like the Samaritan. Over and over in Luke's Gospel, Jesus takes risks like this, challenging the status quo and flipping the narrative in unexpected ways.

- How have you been fortunate to witness individuals speaking and demonstrating truth to the powerful?
- When might you have opportunities to speak this kind of radical truth?

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