

Sheep and Figs and a Prophet named Amos

I want to introduce you to someone whom I think is very special. His name is Amos. Amos lived almost 2,800 years ago. Almost 750 years before Jesus was born. He lived in a part of Israel that is called Judah (show map). Amos worked herding sheep. He also worked taking care of a special kind of fig tree called a sycamore fig. I think he might have taken the sheep into the country where they could eat grass, and while they were eating he would work on fig trees that were close by.

It seems that he had a good life and was very successful in his farming. And then one day God spoke to him. God told him to go from his home in Judah to a land to the north of Judah and to say the words that God told him to say.

God wanted Amos to be a prophet. Does anyone know what a prophet is? (Listen for words like fortuneteller, man of God,). A prophet is a very special person. Prophets in the Bible do not tell fortunes or predict the future. Prophets are men and women that God talks to directly just like I am talking to you now. God gives them the job of speaking Gods words to other people so they can hear them. Moses was a prophet as was his sister Miriam. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah were also prophets. Deborah was a prophet in the book of Judges.

God spoke to each of them and told them what to say to the people. A lot of times prophets told people things they did not want to hear. They might tell them that they are not worshipping God in the right way. That is what Jeremiah told the Israelites. Prophets might also tell them that they had to move from where they were living and take a long trip to another country, which is what Moses did.

Amos's job was to go to the land north of Judah that was also part of Israel (it would be like going from Virginia to Maryland) and giving the people there a message from God. We heard part of that message today. In the verses that Weston read for us.

The words might have been hard to understand because we don't hear words like this often. But what Amos said to the people was something like this.

“Listen up you people that stomp on people who have nothing and hurt poor folks. You want to know when you can make more money even if it is on a Sunday morning when you should be in church. You cheat people by not giving them a full pound, and you don't give them the proper change after they have paid. God swears that he will not forget all of the bad things you have done to the poor and hungry people.”

Does that sound like God is happy? Do you think God is mad? I think so too. The people that God sent Amos to talk to were hurting poor and hungry people by cheating them and abusing them. God wanted it to stop. That is why he sent Amos.

It was a hard job for Amos, because prophesying is not what shepherds and those who work on fig trees normally do. After all, would the sheep even listen if he told them things that God said? I think they would go on munching grass and ignore him.

But the people in the other part of the country got mad at Amos for saying these things. They did not want to listen. What do you think happened to these people who did not listen and kept on hurting the poor and needy? A lot of bad things happened. Other countries came and took all that they had. They made the move from their homes. These greedy people became poor themselves.

Amos did not speak God's words because God loves poor people more than rich people. God loves all of us equally. So when we hurt, or cheat, anyone God is disappointed in us. All people are made in God's image not just pretty people, or our friends, or the wealthy, or those that are important. God wants us to treat the poor as well as we treat our family and our friends. When we don't, God is disappointed and might send a prophet like Amos to help us see the way to loving all people just as God does.