

25C 2019 SML
AMOS 8:4-7

Salvation History attests to the inevitable. You cannot serve both God and mammon. Take your focus from Yahweh, Almighty God, and your attention will fall to yet another god, the almighty dollar. This evening's/morning's gospel bares this out in a parable of a crime covering up a crime. So let's delve back into the Old Testament, as the war between serving God and mammon is as old as the ages.

When Israel was an infant their ruler was not a king. Their ruler was Yahweh. Whenever there was a decision to be made or an undertaking to be accomplished, God would raise up leaders:

- ✓ as He did Moses to exodus the people from Egypt,
- ✓ as He did Joshua to conquer the Promised Land,
- ✓ as He did the twelve judges to aid and relieve his people in time of external danger.

Israel, when focused on Yahweh, the almighty God, went thirty-one and 0 against the kings of other nations.

But as Israel grew, she was not so focused on Yahweh, the almighty God. Her eyes looked to the left and to the right, and she saw kings of other nations, and despite the fact that thirty-

one kings were rendered powerless before Yahweh, the almighty God, they wanted a king because:

- ✓ kings lived in palaces,
- ✓ kings had many wives,
- ✓ but most of all, kings were wealthy; they had many an almighty dollar.

What Israel did not realize was not everyone got to live in palaces, not every woman became the king's wife, and not everyone was wealthy. The rich got richer. The poor got poorer.

Yet the people were religious . . . but in a convenient sort of way . . . because their focus was not completely on Yahweh the almighty God, but on Jeroboam the almighty king, on another god, the almighty dollar, or on no god at all.

Needless to say, there was wisdom writer after wisdom writer and prophet after prophet who tried at length to refocus Israel on Yahweh, the almighty God:

- ✓ what the Wisdom writers wrote in 163 chapters,
- ✓ what Jeremiah wrote in 52 chapters,
- ✓ and what Hosea wrote in fourteen chapters,
- ✓ Amos covered in nine.

This evening's/morning's first reading:

- ✓ you treat people like dirt
- ✓ you sell a man for pair of sandals
- ✓ father and son go after the same little girl.

You care less about the widow and the orphan because you are selling even the refuse of the wheat. Does anyone remember what it was like for us in Egypt? It is our law to leave the leftovers for the widow and the orphan. Is anybody still reading Deuteronomy these days?

You shall not violate the rights of the alien or of the orphan, for remember you were once slaves in Egypt, and the Lord, your God, ransomed you from there; that is why I command you to observe this rule. "When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf there, you shall not go back to get it; let it be for the alien, the orphan or the widow, that the Lord your God, may bless you in all your undertakings. When you knock down the fruit of your olive trees, you shall not go over the branches a second time; let what remains be for the alien, the orphan and the widow. When you pick your grapes, you shall not go over the vineyard a second time; let what remains be for the alien, the orphan and the widow. For remember that you were once slaves in Egypt; that is why I command you to observe this rule. (DT 24:17-22)

You are crooked in your business dealings. Your bushel weight is not a bushel at all. It's less than a bushel and you

know it for you have diminished the ephah. You diminished the weight.

True you are in temple every Sabbath praying to Yahweh the almighty God . . . the whole time you can't wait for the Sabbath to be over. "When will the new moon be over? When will the Sabbath be over so that we can get back to our business and sell less than a bushel of wheat for the price of a bushel of wheat, a bushel of wheat that is supposed to be left for the widow and the orphan in the first place.

And you do all this cheating while being so complacent, so nonchalant, so "who cares?"

- ✓ lying on your beds and couches
- ✓ eating your lamb
- ✓ following not the notes on the sheet music
- ✓ drinking wine from bowls
- ✓ rubbing yourselves down with the best oil . . .

Thus has sworn the Lord by the pride of Jacob: "Think not that I will forget a thing you have done! You'll be the first to go into exile."

Due to this organization's continued inability to generate revenues to support our current cost structure, drastic measures are being taken to restore our company to

financial health. This management team has taken the decision, upon deep reflection, and regret, to offer selected senior members of our workforce the opportunity to pursue other interests outside of the scope of their responsibilities within this corporation. Pursuant to this, retirement incentive packages will be distributed Monday October 4. While this offer does not provide these individuals with the full set of retirement benefits contemplated in our current employee benefits brochures, we believe this offer to be adequate and appropriate given the competitive conditions of the market place within which this organization operates. All individuals meeting the eligibility requirements are urged to give their full consideration to this generous offer.

Stated simply, so the rich few can increase their own profit margin, a selected many, most of whom were just shy of the magic number of age and years of service to qualify for the retirement package and hospitalization they counted on in their old age, are being “given the opportunity to pursue other interests.”

- When I was on my leave of absence, part of my time was spent in corporate America, where I worked for a very large, stable insurance company that has led that industry since 1931. As a new manager, I spent over a month in training before I was given any managerial responsibilities. I was very impressed with the company’s philosophy of striking the right balance among:

- ✓ stockholders,
- ✓ board of directors,
- ✓ employees
- ✓ and corporate citizenship.

In other words, it was not all about stock returns. It was all about:

- ✓ stock returns,
- ✓ and leadership,
- ✓ and employees
- ✓ and the community.

They understood that you cannot expect a department of five to now do the work of ten. They understood Pharaoh's philosophy of supplying no straw and expecting the same tally of bricks does not work.

Before the Powerpoint slide that showed the balance among stockholders, board of directors, employees and corporate citizenship was the slide that said, "Family First!" "Family First!" What a novel idea. I thought to myself, "I want to work for this company."

For the selected many who have received such a memo, you are the modern day aliens, orphans and widows whom

Amos defends so vehemently. The rich few who find it easier to devise such policies and compose such memos rather than come up with a business plan that balances:

- ✓ stockholders and
- ✓ board of directors and
- ✓ employees and
- ✓ corporate citizenship,

that puts "Families First," they are the modern day trampers of the needy who destroy the poor of the land. Their focus has turned from Yahweh, Almighty God. Their attention has fallen to yet another god, the almighty dollar.

You cannot serve both God and mammon. And thus has sworn the Lord by the pride of Jacob: "Think not that I will forget a thing you have done!"