

“This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand.” I have with me today a plumbline or a plumb bob. It cost less than \$10 from Menards, but you could use any weight and a string from around your house. What does it do? In a sense, it does nothing, it just sits here. However, this tool was used even in ancient Egypt for a very important purpose: to tell if a wall or a building is straight up and down.

Our God and His Word are the plumb line in our text from Amos which tells us right and wrong, and how we are to live our lives. **GOD'S PEOPLE TRUST GOD'S HARD TRUTHS LEAD TO LIFE.**

First, I. Amos trusted God's hard truths lead to life. A brief review. In the times before Jesus, God's people lived in what is now modern-day Israel. After King Solomon died, the northern kingdom of Israel split off from the southern kingdom of Judah. God's people were divided! The southern kingdom was where Jerusalem was, and that's where the Lord said that His people should worship.

But when the northern kingdom split off, they didn't want to go to Jerusalem because they didn't like the people of Judah, so they made their own altars to worship God in their own way. It's like when you would always go to your friend's house to borrow his tools, when you get into a fight with him, you just go ahead and buy your own tools, so you don't have to see your friend anymore.

But this wasn't as simple as buying a new tool, God said there is one way to worship Him which leads to life, and that's at the temple in Jerusalem. The northern kingdom, also known as the kingdom of Israel or the house of Jeroboam, was disobeying God's will. They were going crooked even when the plumb bob said to be going up and down.

But the thing about a plumb bob is that no matter which way you twist the board, the plumb bob always points down. The plumb line doesn't change, but you do.

But the Lord loved the house of Jeroboam so much that He took the prophet Amos from his work of farming to warn the people of the northern kingdom of their sins. Maybe some of you know men who grew up on the farm and went into the ministry.

Amos shared this word of warning from the Lord Himself, **“Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”**

What scary news! The Lord was going to abandon the people of Israel, and in the process, their places of worship, their high places and sanctuaries, were going to be destroyed.

The message of the plumb bob is a hard truth. But it is a hard truth that intends for people to listen to the warning and believe. The people of Israel wanted Amos to stop preaching, but the Lord sent Amos anyway that they might turn and repent of their sins.

They ultimately didn't listen, and the board kept on getting more and more crooked. God's people worshipped false gods and didn't worship the true God. Foreign invaders destroyed the northern kingdom, and eventually Judah, the southern kingdom was destroyed. The ray of hope is that the Lord promises through the prophet Amos, **“In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old,”** The Lord will rebuilt the house of David, and it will be according to the straight and narrow, it will line up with the plumb line.

Second, II. John trusted God's hard truths lead to life. Our Gospel text recounts the story of John the Baptist's beheading. Not only do sinners reject God's prophets, but they also kill them. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus who sought to make straight the crooked paths and sought to make level the hilly roads that led to the Savior. He was working to lead God's people to be in line with the perfect righteous up and down plumb line of God's Word.

But it was a hard truth for people to swallow. When a father disciplines a child, it's easy for the child to rebel and resent him for punishing her. Something similar happened in the case of John the Baptist. When he warned Herod that marrying his brother's wife was sin, Herodias, Herod's wife, got angry at him.

The society of Jesus' time was no better than the society in Amos' time. How crooked can it get? It can't get more crooked than sideways. Where does sideways meet up and down? It meets it in the cross.

The cross of Christ is a hard truth because we know that at the cross, God's people rejected their savior. The cross of Christ is a hard truth because we know that if we were to stand up to God's perfectly straight plumb line, we would be found wanting and sinful. It was for these sins that Jesus had to die. It was for these sins that your savior bled.

Yet we trust that this cross leads to life. The good news of Jesus dying and rising again for sinners is something for Amos to hear. It is something for John the Baptist to hear as he languished in prison on death row. It's something that you and I need to hear. It's something that the dying world around us needs to hear.

Jesus willingly offering Himself up for you and me and rising again to new life is a message of hope that in a crooked world, there is a place for people who have messed up lives: it is in Christ's Church. It is a message that lets us know that no matter how crazy things get in this life: buildings may crumble, lives may be lost, the T.V. tells you right is wrong and wrong is right, that the perfect plumb line

of God's Word remains, and the Lord is building His people into this perfect structure to be revealed on the last day when He raises us from the dead.

Finally, III. We trust God's hard truths lead to life. Maybe we can relate to Amos in our Old Testament text today. Life as a Christian isn't always easy. Maybe your classmates in school are mean to you. Maybe your coworkers say lots of swear words and they expect you to act like them. Last month, maybe someone pressured you to wear a rainbow flag button at work or something like it.

As Christians we are called to speak the truth in love. We are called to be that straight up and down plumb line in a wicked and crooked generation. Because a carpenter isn't loving if he simply tapes the plumb line to line up with a crooked structure and tells the owner that the building is flush.

Christianity does have hard truths as summarized in the ten commandments. It can be uncomfortable for you to tell a coworker that you would prefer that she doesn't use swear words when you're talking to her. It can be difficult to say that although you care for your friend, God's Word doesn't approve of him pursuing a homosexual relationship. It can be tough to tell out of town guests that you can't join them for brunch and instead invite them to your church for worship.

Warning others isn't about making yourself feel good. It isn't about getting on your high horse. Warning is about ultimately inviting them to trust in the one who is Holy and Righteous, and who can make them holy and righteous by His blood.

However, we trust that what God commands is always good, and He would never lead us astray. Yeah, in Amos' day, going to worship at Bethel might have seemed just as fine as worshipping at Jerusalem in the same way that someone might say that sleeping with his girlfriend is just as fine as a husband sleeping with his wife, but in both cases the difference is night and day, life and death.

That might mean you suffer, but you have eternal life in Christ Jesus. You need not fear suffering because you have eternal comfort from the Lord who suffered for you. You need not fear rejection because you'll never fall out of favor with Jesus Christ who was rejected by men. You need not fear even death because Jesus Christ died and rose for you, and you will be raised alongside Amos, John the Baptist, and all believers.

Thank God that the plumb line still stays straight. It just stays there, staying straight, and giving guidance to builders. God's Word continues to provide for us as that perfectly straight plumb bob. Through it we receive warning to prevent us from living a way of life that could lead to eternal death. Through it we receive forgiveness and hope where we fall short. Through it we can warn others and tell them the good news of the one who lived a perfect life for them.