

Pentecost 7 –July 12, 2015

Text: Amos 7:7-15

Theme: "A Plumb Line. A Plumb Life."

**About 20 years ago, Danya and I had a good friend who was in the midst of a career crisis. He had had two jobs in a row turn very sour very quickly and he just wasn't sure he wanted to continue to pursue the same line of work. He wondered if God was showing him that he had other opportunities for him. So I asked him what it was he wanted to do. What did he enjoy doing? He said he loved to build things and he thought he might want to become a general contractor but he had never done anything like that before. It just happened that Danya and I had just refinanced our house and pulled out some money to rehab our bathroom. I suggested that we needed our bathroom remodeled and he needed a project to see if this is what he wanted to do. "Why don't you use our bathroom as a test case to see if it is something you would like to do for a living?" I asked. He agreed and off he went into the world of general contracting. I came home one day to see him slumped against the wall staring blankly at the bathtub. "What's the matter, Steve?" I asked. He glumly pointed at the wall.**

**Apparently Steve had not used a plumb line and while all the tiles on the bathroom wall were 100% square and straight with each other, our old house was neither square nor straight with anything, and so the tiles allsloped merrily downhill to the left. The whole wall had to be torn out and redone. Plumb lines are important. Plumb lines are a thin piece of twine with a weight at the bottom and when hung up give you a**

**straight line down. Without such an objective basis, how can you know what is straight down? If you are off by only a fraction of an inch, everything can go catawampus and you'll never notice until it is too late.**

**God's law is our plumb line. The 10 Commandments give us an objective absolute. For instance, you shall not steal. Well what if I am starving and I need to feed my family? You shall not steal. There is no "what if." If you steal, it is wrong. There is no condition in which stealing is right. It is a sin to break a commandment no matter how many perfectly valid reasons you can imagine for doing so. This does not mean that God's law is easy. It does not mean that it always seems logical to us. But it is what it is and it is always right, true, straight. It is our plum line.**

**Amos brought it to the attention of King Jeroboam and John the Baptist brought it to the attention of King Herod. Both prophets stretched out the plum line in front of their respective leaders. There you go King. Here is where your lives and your laws are not right, true, or straight. Jeroboam was committing adultery against God by having the people worship Baal. Herod was committing adultery against his wife by divorcing her so that he could marry his brother's wife who was also his niece, by the way. Neither Amos nor John were appreciated by their respective leaders. Legend says that Amos died a violent death and we know that John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod who was manipulated by Herodias. That's what John got for his honesty. No one likes it when it is pointed out to us that our lives are all catawampus.**

**God's law is our plumb line. Only by comparing our lives to his Law, his perfectly true plumb line, can we be sure that our lives are plumb. For us who are his children, the law is not a threat. We don't fear the law because we are not under its condemnation. The Law cannot damn us because we are saved by the Grace of God. But that does not mean that the law is of no use to us. It is of amazing use because it is our plumb line. We never have to wonder what is straight and what is crooked, what is right and what is wrong. No matter what situation you face in life, the plumb line will give you the answer whether you use the 10 Commandments or Jesus' far more simple two commandments, "love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself." What path can I take that will allow me to fully love both God and my neighbor? If the path you are considering either does not love God or does not love your neighbor, you know it is the wrong path.**

**Of course, not every decision is black and white because the information we have is sometimes vague or inaccurate. Beyond that, we live in a broken world and people are sometimes untruthful and sometimes we have difficulty being honest with ourselves. The plumb line however, never wavers and of that we can be certain and that is of great comfort. Steve could have looked at those tiles on my bathroom wall and pretended that they were plumb. He could have saved himself a great deal of money and time and just told me that the wall was plumb and it wasn't his fault that the house was crooked. But he chose to do what was right and tear the whole thing out and do it correctly because**

**he was a man of honor. That is exactly why we pray what we pray in the Collect of the Day today, "Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death." We pray that God will give us the wisdom and strength to see his plumb line clearly and use it. If we use a plumb line, we can live a plumb life that both honors God and celebrates the joy to be found in an honorable life.**

**It really is not hard at all to see. All we have to do is look at what actions, words and deeds show our love for God and our love for each other. The plumb line then becomes really obvious. What is hard, what we pray for strength to do, is to tear out the walls in our lives that are not plumb and to rebuild those walls to be plumb with God. To do that, we need strength. Come to the Lord's Supper and receive the very medicine you need for the demolition you need to do. Not only does he provide us with the plumb line, he provides us with his own body and blood to empower us to use it. You and I, washed in the waters of Baptism and nourished with the Lord's body and blood can stand with John the Baptist and Amos embracing God's Law and knowing that as hard as it is, it is just as beautiful and following it will bless us far more than we can imagine.**