

# Maranatha Mirror Message

## THE PLUMB LINE (Where's the Beef)



Amos "Measures Injustice" courtesy of Mindi Oaten  
[mindioaten.com](http://mindioaten.com)

### Where's the Beef?

If you want to hear some real prophecy from TV turn away from the religious programs and just watch the old "Where's the Beef" commercial on YouTube. That's prophecy. The little ladies look at this great big beautiful hamburger bun and they're admiring it...and it's wonderful! Everybody's impressed by this bun. Then the lady with the raspy voice says, "Where's the beef?....Where's the beef?"



American culture is just like that bun...with a hamburger on it about the size of a quarter.

All kinds of froth and very little substance. The worst offender at offering people a great big lovely bun with a shriveled excuse for a hamburger inside is the professing Christian church. And then the voice of the little old lady becomes the voice of God. And he says,

“Where’s the beef?”

— You say you have living bread for the world....

Where is it?

— You say you have the power to change lives....

Where is it?

— You say you’re the one place where the forgotten, rejected, outcasts of this world can find acceptance....

Where are they?

— You say Jesus died for your sins and rose from the grave and is now alive and lives in your midst....

Where is he?

And when God begins to say to the people who claim to be his church, his kingdom, his royal priesthood on this earth, when God begins to say, “Where’s the beef?” the laughing stops and we’re talking about divine judgment.

***When someone has been given much, much will be required in return;  
and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.***

***Luke 12:48***

***Then Jesus told this story: “A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed. Finally, he said to his gardener, ‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down. It’s just taking up space in the garden.’***



***“The gardener answered, ‘Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I’ll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.’”***

***Luke 13:6—9***

The more we have of God’s word and Spirit, the more we taste of God’s mercy, the more clearly we’ve heard the call of the Lord to obedience, the more justified God is in expecting fruit. Not the fruit that appeals to other people and impresses other people, but the fruit that pleases and satisfies God. When God comes to us looking for fruit three, four, five times, and we’re busy producing gorgeous leaves with no fruit...we reach a point where judgment begins.

There are two kinds of judgment:

There is a judgment where God just backs off and leaves us to our own devices....the judgment of abandonment, spiritual death. When God backs away and says, “Have it your way,” you’re not at Burger King, you’re in Hell.

The other kind of judgment is when God, instead of withdrawing, comes near. He comes near and he draws a line and he says, “Everything on this side of the line stays and everything on that side of the line goes.”

The people in the wilderness are dancing around the golden calf while Moses is up on the top of Sinai. God sees this and he’s determined to abandon them to wrath. Moses, under the Spirit, begins to intercede. “Spare your people. Don’t do it!” (It’s the Spirit of the Lord moving Moses to say this.) And so the Lord instead of consuming Israel comes down into its midst for the second kind of judgment. Comes down through Moses and draws a line.

*"Everyone who's on the Lord's side, get on this side of the line, stand here with me."*

You and I haven't been dancing around a golden calf. We've been tiptoeing around a great big hamburger bun with nothing inside. We've been given much and we've produced very little...individually and corporately...who can deny this? And so we, along with thousands of others like us are moving into a time of judgment.

Judgment begins at the house of God...

And so we read in Amos 7:

*The Sovereign Lord showed me a vision. I saw him preparing to send a vast swarm of locusts over the land. This was after the king's share had been harvested from the fields and as the main crop was coming up.*

God is forming locusts. Not just two or three or four or five hundred, but millions of locusts. So many locusts that you can't even see the sky. It's just like night as they come swooping in. They land, and when they go everything green is gone with them.

*In my vision the locusts ate every green plant in sight. Then I said, "O Sovereign Lord, please forgive us or we will not survive, for Israel is so small."*

How can this little nation of Israel make it...it's such a tiny nation, and so weak.

*So the Lord relented from this plan. "I will not do it," he said.*

*Then the Sovereign Lord showed me another vision. I saw him preparing to punish his people with a great fire. The fire had burned up the depths of the sea and was devouring the entire land. Then I said, "O Sovereign Lord, please stop or we will not survive, for Israel is so small."*

*Then the Lord relented from this plan, too. "I will not do that either," said the Sovereign Lord.*

*Then he showed me another vision. I saw the Lord standing beside a wall that had been built using a plumb line. He was using a plumb line to see if it was still straight. And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" I answered, "A plumb line." And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins. The pagan shrines of your ancestors will be ruined, and the temples of Israel will be destroyed; I will bring the dynasty of King Jeroboam to a sudden end."*

*Amos 7 (NLT)*

So God spares Israel the first kind of judgment.

- He's not going to destroy it with a plague of locusts.
- He's not going to destroy it with a plague of fire.

Instead, he comes in with a plumb line.



*"The Plumbline" Gwen Meharg drawneartogod.com*

***"I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins***

...meaning, I'll never again let them get away with a crooked wall or a fruitless tree.

- The straight wall will stand, but the crooked wall comes down.
- The tree that bears fruit will stand, but the tree that bears no fruit comes down.

And so, for 750 years the plumb line in the midst Israel was made up of God's prophets beginning with Amos in about 721 B.C., and running all the way through to the last of the prophets, John the Baptist.

So we read in Matthew 3 beginning at verse 1:

***In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was***

***spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"***

...Right with the plumb line.

***But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (Where's the beef?) Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree (every tree) therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.***

At this point the plumb line switches from John the Baptist the last of the prophets to Jesus the Messiah, the first—born of the New Creation....God the Son, the living word.

And so John goes on to say:

***"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***

So far we all agree and we hear this and love to hear it, but somehow we miss this next verse which says:

***"His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."***



Grain and Weeds courtesy of James B. Janknegt  
[www.bcart.com](http://www.bcart.com)

So Jesus comes to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, deliverance to the captives. To baptize us in the Holy Spirit, But the ultimate purpose of his coming is to clear the threshing floor.

So that over here we put the wheat and over here in the fire the chaff.

The plumb line of God in our midst today is the Spirit of Jesus.

And he is here as our Savior, as our friend, as our healer, as our guide.

But he's also here as the plumb line of God.

And he sees right into our hearts and he knows exactly what we're thinking and what we're doing and where we are.

And he says to the Father, on our behalf:

*“Father, give this fig tree one more year while I dig around it, fertilize it and do everything I can do to help it. If it bears fruit, well and good. If not, you can cut it down.”*

Now the plumb line of the Lord in our midst is measuring us and calling us to repentance to get on the right side of the line in three areas of our lives:

**First, the plumb line of the Lord is in our midst to measure whether we are, in fact, living by faith.**

Living by faith to the point where we're producing the fruits of faith. The fruits of faith are deeds of obedience. And we read in Matthew 7:21:

*“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?”*

'And then will I declare to them, 'Where's the beef?'

- ... I was hungry, you gave me no food.
- ... I was thirsty, you gave me no drink.
- ... I was a stranger, you didn't welcome me.
- ... I was naked, you didn't clothe me.
- ... I was sick, in prison, you didn't come to me.

*“I never knew you, depart from me you evildoers.”*

The fruits of faith are deeds of obedience. Obedience to very simple clear unmistakable commands that Jesus gives us. And the reason we don't perform those deeds of obedience is because we're scared that if we do we'll go broke, we'll lose our friends, or we'll get killed. And Jesus says, “Trust me. Do what I say and trust me. I will be with you. You're going to be all right. Things might be a little different from the way you anticipate them, but you'll be all right. Do what I tell you and trust me. I'm looking for the fruits of faith” .....deeds, deeds, deeds.

**Second, the Lord comes in as a plumb line to measure us to see whether we are, in fact, practicing love.**

The command to love comes again and again.

- Love your enemies.
- Love your neighbor.
- Love one another.

Love one another, love your neighbor, love your enemy to the point where you are producing the fruit of love, and the fruits of love again are deeds...this time *deeds of mercy*.



In Luke 10:25-37

*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side...."*

Now the priest was a lovely big, beautiful hamburger bun...

Where's the beef?

*"Well, I'm on my way to a meeting...I just want to get this book to the printers... I want to do this and I want to do that."*

*....So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side....*

This was a middle sized hamburger bun with nothing inside. He was very very busy checking out other people's doctrines and behavior and attitudes. But he has no substance. He can't see what God's telling him to do in that given moment.

*.....But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine....Which of these three do you think proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

And so the plumb line comes down into our midst and measures us, individually and corporately to see whether we are, in fact, producing the fruits of mercy.

**Third, the plumb line is measuring us to see whether we are given over to the worship of God.**

Are we given over to the worship of God to the point where we are producing the fruits of worship? And the fruits of worship are holy lives.

Lives that hallow God's name.

Lives that are consumed with God.

Whatever form or posture or method of worship we use....

God doesn't care whether we're lying flat on our face or standing with our hands up, or shouting, or weeping...he's looking for fruits of worship.

***Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...***

How can we pray that prayer day after day and not do it?

How can we mean that and not hallow God's name in our life?

Am I hallowing God's name...

in the way I use my time?

in the way I handle my money?

in the way I speak?

in the way I think?

***And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins. The pagan shrines of your ancestors will be ruined, and the temples of Israel will be destroyed; I will bring the dynasty of King Jeroboam to a sudden end."***

"Father, give the fig tree one more year, while I dig around it, fertilize it, do everything I can to help it, if it bears fruit well and good. But if not, you can cut it down."



*Fruitless Fig courtesy of James B. Janknegt bcart.com*

### **Prayer**

Jesus, we bare our hearts before you, confessing that our lives and our churches do not have the substance and power you ordained us to have. May we instead be people and a church that has the beef... that has the living the bread and the power to change lives. May we be places that the outcast and lost can come to and find you... really find you. Measure us and straighten out our crooked walls, work on our roots, fertilize the life we have left in us... so that we can bear the fruit of obedience and love... doing what you call us to do, loving the way you mean us to love. And Lord may our lives burst with holy fruit... because we are drawing life from you...consumed by honoring you, loving you and adoring you. In this fruit, may there be the substance, the beef that gives life so that your plumb line finds us straight, upright and fit for your kingdom work.



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