

"AMOS, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: Amos 1:1-2; 2:4-8; 3:7-8; 5:24

Introduction.

Mr. Beaver said, "He'll be coming and going. One day you'll see him and another you won't. He doesn't like being tied down--and of course he has other countries to attend to. It's quite all right. He'll often drop in. Only you mustn't press him. He's wild, you know. Not like a tame lion."

Lucy said, "Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." "That you will dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver; "If there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly." "Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy. "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

"And now," said Aslan presently, "to business. I feel I am going to roar. You had better put your fingers in your ears." And they did. And Aslan stood up and when he opened his mouth to roar his face became so terrible that they did not dare to look at it. And they saw all the trees in front of him bend before the blast of his roaring as grass bends in a meadow before the wind (C.S. Lewis, *Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*).

Amos knew a thing or two about things "that go roar in the night" (John Stevenson).

He had been raised on stories of Samson killing a lion with his bare hands and of David killing one with his sling. Amos was a shepherd, and if there is anything a shepherd dreads, it is the sound of a lion's roar (v. 2). He had faced his own lions while out with his sheep.

But this lion was different. And Amos was his messenger. God called him out of Tekoa in Judah and sent him north to Bethel in Israel to be the first prophet to speak against Israel. The Lord, who had been Israel's shepherd, had now become Israel's predator. In the prophecy of Amos, the Lord was roaring.

Amos 3:7-8 "For the Lord God does nothing

without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

8 The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?"

Chapter 1 and 3: The judgment Proclaimed, "for these three transgressions and for four..."

The first words out of Amos' mouth were, "The Lord roars from Zion" eight times.

Amos 1:3 Thus says the Lord (that roared):

"For three transgressions of ***Damascus***, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron. 4 So I will send fire.

Amos 1:6 Thus says the Lord:

"For three transgressions of ***Gaza***, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom.

Amos 1:9 Thus says the Lord:

"For three transgressions of ***Tyre***, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they delivered up a whole people to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.

Yes, the roar was scary but those nations were enemies and their crimes were crimes against humanity. They deserved to be destroyed.

Then the roar got a bit closer, Edom, Ammon and Moab. Enemies yes, but kin also, cousins actually, the descendants of Esau and Lot. Then the roar got louder and closer. Now it was getting uncomfortable.

Amos 2:4 For three transgression of ***Judah*** and for four, I will not revoke the punishment.

Sure there wasn't much love lost between the two, but still he was a brother.

Then the roar became deafening. And fingers in the ears hardly muted it. This was personal. This was direct. **Amos 2:6** For three transgression of ***Israel*** and for four, I will not revoke the punishment. The longest and loudest roar of all was reserved for Israel.

But why? Why Israel? Why the chosen people of God?

Amos 3:1-2 Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:
2 “You only have I known of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

God called Abraham out of the Ur of the Chaldees, he promised to make him into a great nation. God guided him and blessed him. And also Isaac and Jacob. To Jacob He gave 12 sons who would become the tribes of Israel. They went to Egypt, about 70 in all. Four hundred years later God raised up Moses to deliver his people out of slavery. Now they were over two million. God brought them into the Promised Land and gave them the land, conquering all their enemies.

God blessed and prospered them and made their name great and they were greatly feared by all the nations. After centuries of struggle, God had given them great prosperity, a sure sign of His rich blessing.

Israel was enjoying great peace and prosperity. Israel was a booming economy, life was good. There were no international conflicts, they felt safe/secure. There was a growing upper class:

Amos 6:4-6 “... who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,
5 who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp
6 who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils ...”

They did what people have always done when times are good. *They forgot.* They forgot God and took for granted all His gifts and blessings. They settled for all the good things and forgot God, their relationship with Him.

They forgot where all they had come from. They forgot love for God and love for their fellow countryman. They forgot to care and to share and to have compassion for the poor.

Amos 8:4-6 Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, 5 saying, “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale,
that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances, 6 that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat?”

They had become a consumer culture, buying and selling, trying to gain an advantage, looking to improve their station, taking advantage of others. Prosperity, luxury, wealth, money, investments, these were the things on their mind and filling their hearts. Where your treasure is there your heart is also.

With all of this came unfaithfulness, sexual immorality, idolatry, exploitation and abuse, in a word, every form of injustice.

Why was the lion roaring, why such a reversal, why such a devastating judgment of total exile and annihilation? Because of all this and one more thing, perhaps worst of all.

Amos 5:21-24 “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.

23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

24 But *let justice roll down* like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

God hates religion and the religious heart. God hates the form of godliness without the reality of godliness. God hates whitewashed tombs, clean and shiny on the outside, but dead on the inside. God hates offerings and songs offered from the hands and lips of those whose hearts are cold and hard, those who do injustice, who seek their own pleasure and comfort and gain, who have no deep affection for God and for their neighbor.

Against all of this the lion will roar.

Chapter 7:1 – 9:6: Visions of Judgment.

The worst part of the lion’s roar, the worst judgment of all is announced in:

Amos 8:11-12 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a *famine* on the land—

not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

12 They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east;

they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.

Scripture says that man does not live by bread alone, but by the very word of God. Without the Word of God this is a death sentence. The famine ahead is of the worst possible kind.

By trivializing God and thinking God impotent, by disregarding God, they have no fear of Him and have denied Him. They think God is tame. God is not tame, He can't be domesticated.

This is not just some local deity, some mountain god or tribal spirit. They have come face to face with the Lord God Almighty, the Lord of hosts, the creator and sustainer of the universe to whom every creature owns absolute allegiance.

Amos 3:4, 6, 8 Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing?
6 Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid?
Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?
8 The lion has roared; who will not fear?
The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?"

Chapter 9:11 – 14: A Promise of Hope.

The Lord God has roared, who will not fear? Is there any hope, any help? There is, but only in the lion Himself. He is not tame, He is not safe, but He is King and He is good.

The last five verses of Amos end with the Lion of the tribe Judah, the Root of David, has conquered and is on David's throne (Revelation 5:5). The coming Son of David is announced.

Amos 9:11 "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.

A booth is another term for tabernacle which means to dwell among. Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us or "tabernacled" among us.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The famine for the **Word** of God is over, the Word has come. God once again entrusted Israel with the revelation of God, the very words of God. The four hundred year drought ends with Jesus.

Israel has been restored, the throne of David has a king sitting on it and the new Israel is the Church of Jesus Christ. The gates of hell itself cannot and will not prevail against the Church. The promise prophesied in Amos 9 has been kept and fulfilled in Christ.

Every OT judgment foreshadows Christ, His coming judgment, the restoration of Davidic royal dynasty and the restoration of the true Israel, the people of God.

Application and conclusion.

God is not a zoo lion, serenely laying in the sun, easily distracted and appeased when thrown another hunk of meat as an offering. God is not safely kept behind the iron bars.

He's not tame like the way He's depicted on TV and in the movies. He's not tame the way Christians imagine Him in their lukewarm worship and devotion. We live in a nation that has trivialized God and has turned Him into a toothless, clawless kitty.

He's a wild lion. He rules the safari as king of the beasts who does as He pleases. He's quick and agile, fearlessly on the move. His roar bends trees like grass.

He can't be domesticated. He is a roaring lion, a consuming fire, a whirlwind. He is good but He's not safe. Yes, He is our heavenly Father, but let's never forget He is a Holy Father, one to be feared and loved at the same time.

If you are not afraid, then I would say be fearful. If you are afraid, then I would say fear not.

The warnings of Amos are still real and the lion will roar again. Jesus is both the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5).

God doesn't exempt His own people from judgment and discipline.

As Peter reminds us:

1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

When things are going well things may not be going well. Prosperity has a way of covering up coming trouble.

We live in a nation that has been incredibly prosperous, a nation with the highest standard of living, the best of everything and more than we need.

And we have forgotten God. We have removed God from our schools and from our court rooms and from the public square. He is the one who provides meaning and purpose and without Him life starts to unravel and fall apart.

Without true manna from heaven we will wither and die, we will bite and devour one another, we will fall deeper and deeper into sin, selfishness, pride, lust and greed.

When religion and faith become disconnected from the life-giving God, it becomes the stench of death. The form of godliness without the power is just that, powerless. Selfishness and self-centeredness draw us away from God and others. Amos warns those comfortable with sin.

As a people who have been redeemed, saved from hell, delivered over from death to life. Love for God leads to love for our neighbor. Jesus shows us how to live this new life in this new day. He shows us care for the poor and afflicted, He shows us generosity and giving, He shows us righteousness and truth and what it means to speak up for the least, the lost, the lonely.

A church that lives in fear of the Lord is a church that has found wisdom, is a church that has heard the roar and instead of running away in fear, has turned to the lion in repentance and has found the fear that turns to faith and freedom. Those who fear the Lord need fear nothing else.

“Amos is a fierce and biting book, and our generation needs to hear its message. We need to be ready to be convicted, prodded, encouraged, and rebuked. But the book ends with a glorious conclusion, one where the promised salvation of God does come into the world. Fix your eyes on the promise fulfilled in Christ” (Doug Wilson).