

Amos – Sermon 6 – Heifers of Hypocrisy – Amos 4:4-13

Intro:

1) Word picture

- a. Most of us looked into the mirror before we came to church this morning
 - i. Wanted to make sure our outfit matched – hair looked right – nothing out of place
 - ii. A mirror reflects to us what we look like – on the outside
- b. There's another kind of mirror – a spiritual mirror
 - i. It doesn't show our outfit, or our hair, or outward reflection
 - ii. It doesn't display our face, it reveals our heart
 - iii. The mirror of God's Word
 - 1. James 1:23,24 – compares hearing God's Word and not doing to a man who looks into a mirror and forgets the reflection he saw

2) In Amos 4, the prophet holds up the real reflection to the audience

- a. Evidently, the Israelites thought they looked good before God
 - i. They attended worship services, offered costly sacrifices, celebrated religious holidays
 - ii. From the earthly perspective, it would appear like a church gathering worth going to
- b. But – when God's Word was applied – it revealed hypocrisy

3) This morning – as we look into the mirror of God's Word, we are not merely examining Israel, we are set to examine ourselves as well

- a. May our prayer be that of the Psalmist – Psalm 139:23,24

4) Last week we met “The Real Housewives of Samaria”

- a. They pursued pleasure while ignoring holiness
- b. This week – Amos shifts from the living room to the sanctuary
 - i. The women who lived in luxury now appear before us in worship
- c. What we will see – nothing really changed except the location
 - i. They exchanged their couches for the altar – but there was never a change of heart in repentance
- d. Their worship wasn't genuine – it was hypocritical
 - i. Their sacrifices weren't obedience – they were rebellion

5) Sermon – Heifers of Hypocrisy

- a. Text – Amos 4:4-13
- b. Applicable to us today – church has become about the “show” or “appearance”
 - i. The primary focus in today's worship is – YOU – Consumer not Christ
 - 1. Worship is focused on your “experience”
- c. Amos is declaring a truth we all need reminding of – Worship is about God

A Pretense of Piety – V4,5

1) Amos issues a fascinating invitation to the audience in V4, 5

- a. This invitation was given to expose their empty, hypocritical worship
- b. Wiersbe calls this section – ‘Holy irony’

2) Note – an invitation to worship was a common gesture in the OT

- a. Ps. 95:6, 96:8,9, 100:2-4
- b. This invitation stands out, however, by what Amos is inviting them to – Transgress
 - i. Transgression – not the goal of worship

3) The Places of their worship

- a. Both locations mentioned here carry a longstanding, significant religious emphasis to God’s people in the OT
- b. Bethel
 - i. Bethel – House + God
 - ii. Associated with Abraham and the covenant – Gen 12:8
 - iii. Jacob’s ladder vision happened there – Gen. 28:19
 - iv. Smauel the prophet judged Israel there – 1 Sam. 7:16
 - v. Place that Jeroboam set up as a rival place of worship – 1 Kings 12:29
 - vi. Served as a place of religious instruction – 2 Kings 17:28
 - vii. Place of political power in Amos’ day – Amos 7:13
- c. Gilgal
 - i. 1st place Israel camped after entering the Promised Land – Josh. 4:19
 - ii. Place where they set the 12 stones from Jordan as a remembrance to the mighty act of God – Josh. 4:20-24
 - iii. Place where Joshua renews covenant with God – Josh. 5:1-9
 - 1. Circumcision – 5:8
 - 2. Passover – 5:10-12
 - iv. Place where the 1st King of Israel, Saul, was crowned – 1 Sam. 11:14,15
- d. One would think – given the religious history of these locations – that they would stand as a great reminder of who their God is and a place that would promote right worship
 - i. But notice – transgress

4) The Perversion of their worship

- a. Evidently worship had deteriorated so much that Amos somewhat sarcastically compares their worship to sin
 - i. In a sarcastic invite – Amos calls for the people to return to these places and sin
 - ii. Contemporary example – pastoring inviting you to church and saying “come to worship, but by attending you’re only sinning more”
- b. Word Amos uses is fascinating
 - i. Transgress – Heb. Pesa – to revolt, to rebel, to break relationship
 - 1. Used in secular vernacular to refer to a vassal kingdom who is in rebellion to the terms of covenant
 - 2. Denotes a deliberate casting off of an allegiance
 - 3. In OT Scripture, this word was used to describe Israel’s rebellion against God
 - a. Isa. 1:2,28; Jer. 2:8; Hos. 7:13
 - ii. It’s clear – the intention of their worship, action of their worship, sacrifices of their worship, and outcome of their worship was not righteousness – it was sin
 - 1. What they called “worship” God classified as sin
 - 2. Their religious activity only multiplied their transgressions
 - a. Multiply – to increase, to become great
 - i. Same word used of Israel in Egypt – Ex. 1:12

5) The Performance of their Worship

- a. On the surface – it appears that Israel was experiencing a great religious revival
 - i. Crowds of people flocking to “holy places”
 - ii. People brought sacrifices and tithes often
 - iii. Yet – Amos exposes their actions as mere performances
 - 1. Empty worship and vain sacrifices
 - 2. Religious activities – no real worship
- b. Amos takes the time to list out their hypocritical religious activity
 - i. Sacrifices – refers to the animal offerings offered in worship and, in part, consumed as a sacred meal (1 Sam. 1:3-5)
 - ii. Tithe – refers to the produce tithe which they were to set aside every 3 years for the poor and needy (Deut. 14:28,29)
 - iii. Thank offering – offering used to express gratitude for a blessing or answered prayer (Lev. 7:11-15)
 - iv. Freewill offering – refers to the voluntary and spontaneous gift birthed from adoration of God (Lev. 7:16, 22:17-19)

- c. Q – how do you know these acts of worship were performance and empty rather than sincere and worship-filled?
 - i. Context
 - 1. Whose land were their cattle and flocks grazing on?
 - 2. Tithe – supposed to help the poor and needy
 - a. How did they actually treat the poor and needy?
 - 3. Thank and freewill offering – birthed out of devotion and adoration of God – it acknowledges a closeness with God
 - a. 2:7 – profane my holy name
 - 4. Leaven – problem – Lev. 7:12 says it was to be “unleavened”
 - a. Reveals how they ignored God’s Word in worship
 - ii. Further – at the conclusion of the sacrifice, the priest would issue a proclamation of God’s acceptance and pleasure
 - 1. Notice who is doing the proclaiming here – themselves
- d. In satire Amos invites the people to proclaim and boast about their offerings
 - i. IOW – give, be seen, and be heard by all because that’s what you love
 - ii. Instead of coming to worship and seek God’s pleasure, their motive was impressing others and self-pleasure
 - iii. Their religious activity had become a venue for self-serving, lavish hypocrisy

6) Their worship was rebellious, insincere, empty, and self-centered – and they loved it!

Application

1) The measure of worship is not how much it moved me, but how it has honored God

- a. We should leave Sundays with a seep impression:
 - i. That God was honored
 - ii. His Word was faithfully and accurately preached
 - iii. Jesus was exalted
 - iv. I was changed

2) True worship is not evaluated by your emotions, but by your obedience

- a. A service can be exciting and engaging but still be unacceptable to God
- b. Worship – Abraham, Gen. 22

3) Worship is not about what I get, it’s about what God receives from me

- a. Worship – my right and faithful response of God’s revelation to me
 - i. Root – to bow down, to stoop low, to pay homage to someone greater
 - ii. A humbling of yourself before God and an accurate acknowledgement of Him

A Persistence of Pride – V6-11

1) In the next portion of the text, Amos lists out the chastisements God gave Israel to reveals His displeasure and give them the opportunity to repent

- a. God issued disciplinary acts against Israel to get their attention – a holy frustration – to lead them back to Him
 - i. Something they should have understood – Deut. 28
- b. Yet – they persisted in their pride and rebellion against God
 - i. Repeated refrain
 - ii. The people experienced God’s discipline but still would not repent and submit to Him
 - 1. They continued in their religious hypocrisy

2) V6

- a. Cleanness of teeth and want of bread
 - i. Refers to a famine
 - ii. Clean teeth because they had nothing to eat to get their teeth messy
- b. Yet – 6c

3) V7,8

- a. Specific drought
 - i. Should have gotten their attention
 - ii. Showed them that God was in control and this was a purposeful drought
- b. Well and cisterns were dried up so they exhaustedly staggered town to town looking for relief
- c. This drought should have been an easy reminder to Israel of God’s promises about the rain
 - i. Lev. 26:18,19; Deut. 11:16,17; Deut. 28:23-24
- d. Yet – 8c

4) V9

- a. Smitten – to strike, to hurt, to defeat
- b. Blight and mildew
 - i. Blight – refers to the hot east wind that dried up the plants, scorched the plants
 - ii. Mildew – caused by a parasite worm causing crop damage
- c. Plamer worm – locust or caterpillar
 - i. Word refers to a devouring worm
- d. Again – Israel should have noticed this was a result of disobedience to God’s Word
 - i. Deut. 28:21,22
- e. Yet – 9c

5) V10

- a. Pestilence and the sword
 - i. Mentioned together here probably because it was mentioned together
 - 1. Deut. 28:21,22
- b. Notice – God linked the pestilence to what happened in Egypt
 - i. As if to say they are no better than Pharaoh – he received the plagues and failed to obey God
- c. Young men and horses – military might
 - i. Dead would cause a stench
- d. Why was this such a scandal?
 - i. Deut. 28:7, Lev. 26:6-8
 - ii. However – if they disobeyed – Deut. 28:49-58

6) V11

- a. Evidently God brought a similar punishment against Israel as He did to Sodom and Gomorrah
- b. Note – God uses the same word He did in reference to Sodom and Gomorrah
 - i. Overthrow – Gen. 19:25
 - ii. A clear connection
- c. Firebrand plucked out – imagery suggests God intervened and did not allow total destruction
 - i. Something they should have noticed
- d. What should have been met with praise, was met with continued rebellion – V11c

Application**1) God's discipline is not meant to drive you from Him, but to draw you back to Him**

- a. Notice the refrain – aimed at repentance
- b. People mistake this chastisement as God's demonstration of anger, but in reality, it was an act of God's mercy and love -Heb. 12:5-11

2) When God increases the pressure, it is often because He is increasing the pursuit of your heart

- a. Notice the progression of the chastisements – famine to death
- b. "The longer we resist God's correction, the greater the correction becomes"

3) Understand that God uses "hard providence" or "Merciful frustrations" to bring us back to Him

- a. Eccl.

A Promised Punishment – V12,13

1) At this point in the text we are left to ask – What more could God do?

- a. Sent famine, drought, blight, plagues, wars, catastrophes
- b. No matter what discipline God sent, they would not return
 - i. Evidently He would have to deal with them Himself
 - ii. Prepare to meet thy God!

2) Invitation

- a. This phrase can be seen in 3 different ways
- b. A challenge
 - i. Like God inviting them to meet Him as an adversary
 - ii. Word was used in military context – reference to preparations for war
 - 1. Prov. 21:31, Jer, 46:14
 - iii. Text points to this – V13 – God of hosts
 - 1. Remember – transgress – revolt against a kingdom
 - iv. Spurgeon – “The prophet may be understood as in irony challenging the proud rebels to meet in arms the God whom they have despised. Let them prepare to fight it out with Him whom they have made to be their enemy and agist whose laws they have so continually revolted.”
- c. An invitation
 - i. Invite to repent once again
 - ii. Now that you’ve heard it plainly – start living holy
 - 1. Make the holy preparations
- d. A summons
 - i. A call to give an account before the Great Judge
 - ii. They broke the Law, they ignored the Word, they rebelled, the offenses have accrued - Now come before God and give an account

3) Realization

- a. V13 gives Israel a dose of reality – a realization to the God they were about to meet
- b. V13 is a great doxology of praise to the message Amos just relayed
 - i. Reminding the people God is: Creator, Sustainer, Revealer, Omnipotent, Omniscience
- c. V13 also carries the idea of the real God of Israel Vs the idols they were worshipping
 - i. Baal was worshipped as the god of: storms, rain, fertility, crops, harvest
 - ii. All throughout Amos 4 God has made it clear it was Him not anyone else
 - 1. Note – “I”
 - 2. V13 is not a random doxology – it is a declaration of God’s sovereignty over His creation
 - a. Mountains – creation
 - b. Winds – storms
 - c. Morning/darkness – God over light/dark
 - d. Tread upon high places – where idols were often worshipped

Closing**1) Are you prepared to meet God?**

- a. Prepared when you come to worship?
- b. Prepared to repentantly meet Him if you're facing holy, merciful frustrations
- c. Prepared to meet Him with the good blessings He has given you to steward?
- d. Prepared to meet Him for eternity? Salvation