

Amos – Sermon 8 – Great Expectations – Amos 5:18-27

Intro:

1) Charles Dickens – wrote one of the most famous novels in English titled “Great Expectations”

- a. At its heart – the novel showcases a young man named Pip who spends much of his life believing that everything will finally be right if only his expectations come true
 - i. He imagines that social status will complete him
 - ii. He believes wealth will satisfy him
 - iii. He assumes his future will unfold exactly as he envisions
- b. Yet – as the story progresses, Pip discovers many of his greatest expectations were actually built on illusions
 - i. The very things he anticipated with excitement actually became sources of disappointment because they were founded upon false understandings of reality

2) In Amos 5, Israel had their own “Great Expectations”

- a. They longed for what they called “The Day of the LORD”
 - i. They anticipated it, they desired it, and they expected it
- b. They believed this day would be the day God would finally vindicate them, destroy their enemies, and establish the greatness of Israel
- c. Problem – Israel completely misunderstood what the Day of the LORD would actually mean
 - i. 5:18 – Woe

3) In Dicken’s novel – he constantly overturned expectations

- a. Characters who appear honorable are corrupt
- b. Characters who appear insignificant become pivotal
- c. Pip’s benefactor was not who he expected

4) Likewise – Amos, in chp 5, is overturning Israel’s expectations

- a. They expected light – but God declares darkness
- b. They expected deliverance – God declares judgment
- c. They expected celebration – God declares wailing
- d. They expected God to fight for them – But God was coming against them

5) One of the great dangers of the Christian life is not that we have no expectations of God, but that we have wrong expectations of God

- a. False assumptions are dangerous because they leave us confidently walking toward judgment while expecting blessing

6) Every generation struggles with the temptation of developing wrong expectations about God

- a. We can assume God approves because we attend this specific church
- b. We can assume God approves because we are more conservative in certain ways
- c. We can assume God is on our side because we know right doctrine
- d. Truth – Israel believed all those things and even longed for the Day of the LORD
 - i. Yet – Amos interrupts their celebration with this shocking word – WOE
 - ii. They had great expectations – but their expectations were wrong

7) This morning let's unpack the "Great Expectations" in the text and see how God's Word correctively confronts Israel and what we can glean from it

- a. Sermon – Great Expectations
- b. Text: Amos 5:18-27

The Day They Desired – V18-20

- 1) It is evident from the content of Amos' message here that people in his day spoke positively about the "Day of the LORD"**
 - a. Amos refers to those who "desire" that day in his opening phrase
 - i. Desire – and eager desire, to wait longingly, closely connected to the cravings of the appetite
 1. Stated in the plural – indicating multiple people desired this
 2. Hithpael participle – indicates a continued action
 3. The word gives insight into Israel's feelings toward that Day
 - b. Problem – what they anticipated wasn't what was going to happen
 - i. Their expectations of that Day were wrong

The Day of Desire

- 1) Q – What were they expecting the Day of the LORD to be?**
 - a. Interesting – Amos was the 1st prophet, chronologically, to write about the "Day of the LORD"
 - i. However, this does not mean Amos invented the concept
 - b. Instead:
 - i. The concept of the Day of the LORD likely existed in Israel theology through earlier prophetic preaching
 - ii. It's evident the Day had become part of Israel's national expectation
 - iii. Although Amos was the 1st inspired writer to record the phrase chronologically, later prophets expounded on the doctrine
 1. Isaiah, Joel, Obediah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Malachi
- 2) Q – what was the common desire and belief about the Day of the LORD?**
 - a. Phrase lit. means – the Day *belonging* to the LORD or the Day *consecrated* for the LORD
 - i. IOW – it was the day the Lord would decisively intervene in a major way for Israel
 - b. Depending on who is being addressed – it could mean:
 - i. Salvation, deliverance, restoration, judgment, or warfare
- 3) Israel's expectation of the Day was "nationalistic"**
 - a. Israel assumed something like this – When the Day that belongs to the LORD arrives, He is going to destroy all our enemies
 - b. Think about Israelite history: Every major intervention of God had been against somebody else
 - i. Egypt, Philistines, Ammonites, Canaanites
 - ii. God repeatedly fought for Israel
 - c. So over the generations – Israel apparently developed the expectation that the "Day of the LORD" is when God finally and fully defeats all Israel's enemies bringing true and lasting restoration for Israel

- 4) **It is important, when it comes to the Day of the LORD, not to view it only as an act of final judgment**
 - a. Throughout the prophets – the Day of the LORD refers to multiple historical acts of God’s judgment anticipating God’s final act of judgment
 - b. The people Amos was addressing saw the Day of the LORD as a time of great deliverance for themselves and a terrible punishment for their Gentile enemies
- 5) **So – throughout Scripture, the Day of the LORD is linked to God’s deliverance for His covenant people**
 - a. The problem in the text that we’re reading – the vast majority of Israel were self-deceived in believing they were right with God and therefore safe from His holy wrath
 - b. What Israel failed to see – they had constantly been living in rebellion to the covenant, they have rejected the Lordship of God, and as a result have become the very enemies of God themselves

The Day of Despair -V18

- 1) **Note how Amos starts this message – Woe**
 - a. The word was ordinarily used as a wail of grief over the death of someone
 - i. 1 Kings 13:30, Jer 22:18, 34:5
 - ii. Amos is continuing to carry on the funeral imagery he started chp 5 with
 - b. When the word is pronounced over those who are living – it was given as a projection of their destruction or death
- 2) **Q – who were the recipients of this Woe?**
 - a. “..unto you that desire the day of the LORD”
 - b. Its clear that Amos’ audience did not realize the horrors which would befall them when this Day of visitation arrived
- 3) **These religious hypocrites were sure that God would spare Israel and condemn their enemies – so they longed for that Day**
 - a. It could be said – the Day of the LORD would bring the opposite of what they expected
- 4) **Notice the question – “to what end is it for you?”**
 - a. Force of the question – what good will that day do you? -or- Why in the world would you want it?
 - b. Its saturated with prophetic sarcasm
 - i. Imagine someone celebrating the arrival of a judge without realizing they were the guilty defendant
 1. That’s Amos’ point

The Day of Darkness – V18,20

- 1) The day they are desiring thinking that it will be light will actually bring them darkness**
- 2) Comparison is drastic**
 - a. Light – commonly representing God’s favor, blessing, salvation, life
 - i. Ps. 27:1 – The LORD is my light and my salvation
 - ii. Isa. 9:2 – The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light
 - iii. Micah 7:7 – ..When I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me
 - iv. Mal. 4:2 – the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings
 - b. Darkness – a picture of judgment, calamity, and death
 - i. Ex. 10:21-23 – darkness as a plague over Egypt
 - ii. Isa. 5:30 – ..behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof
 - iii. Joel. 2:1-2 – For the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. A day of darkness and of gloominess
 - iv. Zeph 1:14-15 – the great day of the LORD is near....That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress...a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness
 - v. Picture of darkness is carried thorough the NT as a place of punishment
 1. Matt. 8:12, 22:13, 25:30
- 3) Israel expected the day will be light – Amos answers and says it will be darkness**
 - a. Note – he doesn’t just say there will be darkness, he adds “...and not light”
 - b. This is an emphatic Hebrew contrast
 - i. Amos is removing any possibly of hope they were holding on to
- 4) The darkness he pronounces is an outcome of their rebellion against God’s Word**
 - a. Deut. 28:28,29

A Day of Doom – V19

- 1) Essentially – there will be no escaping this Day of darkness and despair**
 - a. Explain the picture
- 2) Amos is telling them – there is no hiding place from God’s wrath**
 - a. We would say – You can run but you can’t hide
- 3) This portion of the passage may be addressing their faulty mindset that – because God’s judgment is delayed, it have been diverted**
 - a. Amos addresses this falsehood
- 4) Malachi addresses this aspect of God’s arrival**
 - a. Mal. 3:2

The Disobedience they Denied – V21-27

- 1) In the ending segment of his message, Amos is pointing out why the Day of the Lord is not going to be a welcomed experience

The People were Unprepared – V20-23

- 1) “Amos looked around and pointed out the sins of the people that made them totally unprepared to experience the Day of the LORD” – WWW
- 2) Amos addressed the hypocritical worship they were engaging in
 - a. Something he already dealt with – 4:4,5
- 3) Evidently the people loved to practice religion – but it was THEIR religion
 - a. Burger king religion – Have it your way
 - b. Notice – “your” – V21,22
 - i. Amos repeated this word as a deliberate contrast between a Godly sacrifice and a self-centered sacrifice
 - ii. It was a grammatical and theological statement
 - c. Notice how this is in contrast to the Levitical law
 - i. Lev. 23:2
- 4) Their religion wasn’t about what God wanted, it was what suited them – And Amos shared with them what God thought about it
 - a. Notice the strong wording – again, points back to the Levitical sacrifice
 - i. God’s sacrifices were accepted and welcomed by him
 - b. Here
 - i. Hate – to reject, be negative towards
 - ii. Despised – to become loathsome
 - iii. Accept – to be pleased with, to take pleasure in
 - iv. Regard – to look at, to behold, to gaze at
 1. Prov. 16:15
- 5) The people were wholly unprepared to meet God
 - a. Their worship was heartless, unrighteousness, filled with opinion and not the Word of God

The People were Unconcerned – V24

- 1) V24 is the key verse in this text**
 - a. It reveals God's concern toward the people having a righteous character and a just conduct
- 2) God was calling for real belief that produce real action**
 - a. It didn't matter how much religious activity was going on
 - b. Business is not an indicator of holiness
- 3) True worship will produce a real care for others**
 - a. IOW – Loving God produces a heart that loves others
- 4) The fact that Amos had to address this reveals the unconcern Israel had in actually living righteousness out**
 - a. "Their religion was unrelated to righteousness" – Alan Mosley
- 5) Interesting imagery**
 - a. They faced a physical drought – 4:7,8
 - b. If they wanted rain from the heavens, they needed to let just flow in the streets

The People were Unrepentant – V25-26

- 1) You can almost hear the argument from Israel – "But we are doing what Moses commanded"**
 - a. Yet God shares the truth
- 2) V25-26 – God is revealing to them that from the very beginning they have wandered in their worship**
 - a. Golden calf, idols, adopting Canaanite worship
- 3) IOW – their present idolatry is not an isolated instance, it is a continuation of a history of covenantal unfaithfulness, a constant lack of repentance**
 - a. V25,26 is not God changing the subject – He is publishing the evidence

Therefore – V27

A Discernment that's Detrimental

1) Don't be self-deceived

- a. Application: Do not assume that your anticipation of Christ's return excuses your present obedience to Christ's commands
- b. Explanation:
 - i. Israel eagerly desired the Day of the LORD – believing it would bring blessing
 - ii. Yet they failed to see that their unrepentant hearts placed them under God's judgment
- c. Truth: We joyfully sing songs about Christ's return – when we all get to heaven, what a day that will be, I'll fly away, when the roll is called up yonder
 - i. But we must remember – every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of their stewardship

2) Real worship produces Righteous living

- a. Application: an evidence of true worship is not merely what happens in the sanctuary, but what happens in the days that follow
- b. Explanation:
 - i. God called for them to let judgment and righteousness flow – V24
 - ii. Because real submission to Him meant application in the marketplace
- c. Truth: when we truly meet with God in worship, it goes past the "Amen"
 - i. Real worship produces a pursuit

3) Never mistake religious activity for God's approval

- a. Application: It is possible to partake in every act of the service while missing the very presence and pleasure of God
- b. Explanation:
 - i. Israel was faithfully observing feasts, offering sacrifices, gathering for worship
 - 1. Yet God declared that He hated their very worship because their hearts weren't there for Him
- c. Truth: We must continually take inventory if we are gathering as a religious activity of are we truly seeking to worship God in Spirit and Truth

4) Christ alone makes one ready for the Day of the LORD

- a. Application: the Day of the Lord only because a day of hopeful expectation if Jesus bears the judgment you deserve
- b. Truth: Gospel
 - i. Apart from Jesus, you are in the same situation as Israel – the day of the Lord is a day of darkness
 - ii. Yet those who have repentantly trusted in Jesus, it is a welcomed embrace