

Amos – Sermon 1 – Introduction – 1:1

Intro:

- 1) Video – celebration over receiving God’s Word**
 - a. Challenge to us – receive God’s Word with joy

- 2) God’s Word should be received with worship, celebration, prayer, and joy**
 - a. However – that is not always the case
 - b. What if God’s Word stands in contrast to how you are living and what you are believing?

- 3) Our study in the book of Amos brings us to a faithful prophet of God who shows up to speak God’s Word to the Israelites**
 - a. His message, however, is not one of great blessing and prosperity – rather it is one of conviction, challenge, exposure, and judgment
 - b. Amos is a hard-hitting preacher who task was simply to show up and proclaim “God says this”

- 4) Amos was a courageous man of God with a contagious faith**
 - a. His ministry was not one of popularity and acceptance
 - i. Actually – he was not really accepted
 - b. Amos was faithful and preached a message of warning
 - i. “The citizens of Israel had no one but themselves to blame when they were unprepared to meet God” – Trent Butler

- 5) Our Goal – take seriously the exposure and challenge that Amos presents to God’s people about their half-hearted worship and their lack of real faith and faithfulness**
 - a. Today – understand the overall context and introduction so we can frame the message biblically and with knowledge
 - b. May we be eager to receive God’s Word in prayer, faith, and celebration allowing it to shape us to look more like Jesus

Unlikely Prophet

1) One of the remarkable truths we read in Scripture, and we see here in Amos, is that God often chooses unexpected vessels to accomplish extraordinary purposes

- a. Humanly speaking – Amos is an unlikely choice to accomplish the task of calling Israel to repentance
 - i. Today’s approach – famous preacher, charismatic speaker, a renown theologian
- b. Who did God choose to confront a rebellious people, rebuke a wayward king, and call out for repentance?
 - i. Amos – a man with no theological credentials, no formal training, nothing to brag on
 1. But he had willful obedience

2) Meaning of his name

- a. The prophet of this book is introduced as “Amos”
 - i. In the ANE culture – a name was more than a title, it was an indicator of character, a representation of circumstance, a declaration of expectations
- b. Amos – burden bearer – one who carries a load
 - i. Root – to load a burden, to lay a burden upon, translated – “heavy loaden”
- c. Amos’ name was reflective of the burden he would carry in his ministry calling
 - i. Burden to share God’s Word even though it would be unpopular
 - ii. Burden to confront the sin that became socially acceptable
 - iii. Burden of warning a rebellious nation that God’s judgment was coming
 - iv. “Since most of the prophecies of Amos concerned coming judgment on either the nations surrounding Israel or judgments on Israel itself, he was a man with a burden.” – David Guzik
- d. Application – there is a healthy burden that is attached to being a faithful follower of Jesus
 - i. A burden to share the truth with a world living in lies
 - ii. A burden to share the message of life to a world comfortable in its death
 - iii. A burden to stand in opposition to the socially acceptable sins of the day
 - iv. A burden to be uncompromising in a world saturated in compromise

3) Merit of his calling

- a. What’s unique about Amos’ preaching ministry was the fact that – all though not much is known about Amos outside of what we read here – God saw fit to record his lack of “official” credentials
- b. One thing that is clear from this book – Amos was not, by occupation, a theological preacher (1:1)
 - i. Amos did not descend from a priestly family, he did not come from a ruling class of family, he held no formal religious office, and he did not have any formal theological education
 - ii. Listen – 7:14
 1. Amos fiercely denied any connection to the professional prophets of his day

- c. So what was his occupation?
 - i. Amos was a shepherd, rancher, and farmer who was called by God into the prophetic ministry
- d. Clarify – Amos was not some uneducated hillbilly farmer
 - i. The text presents Amos as a wealthy rural businessman who would have been a highly respectable figure in his community
- e. Textual insight
 - i. Herdsmen 1:1 – noqed – one who raises or breeds sheep
 - 1. Not the common Hebrew word for the lowly shepherd
 - 2. This word was used in reference to a sheepmaster
 - a. 2 Kings 3:4 – Mesha king of Moab was called this
 - 3. Refers to someone who managed a shepherding operation
 - a. Either bred a certain kind of sheep, or was successful in managing large herds
 - 4. This specific occupation was well attested to in Mesopotamian history as one who oversees other herdsmen
 - 5. This presents Amos as a wealthy businessman because he was a successful shepherd
 - ii. Herdsmen 7:14 – different word, root suggests oxen or cattle
 - iii. Gatherer of sycamore fruit
 - 1. Refers to the sycamore fig tree was a broad heavy tree between 25-50 ft. high
 - a. Produced fig fruit 3-4 times a year
 - 2. Gatherer – technical term for scratching the young fruit so that it grows into a sweeter fig
 - 3. Interesting – Tekoa was at too high an elevation for these trees to grow
 - a. Suggests Amos had property elsewhere
 - b. Indicates that he was a wise and wealthy businessman
- f. Rather than being a professional preacher sitting in a lofty office, Amos was a herdsmen, rancher, and farmer

4) Mission of his ministry

- a. Note – Amos was from Tekoa
 - i. Small town roughly 10 miles south of Jerusalem, about 5 miles south of Bethlehem
- b. Tells us Amos was from the southern kingdom Judah – yet his calling was to the northern kingdom Israel
 - i. 7:15
- c. This mission required significant and sacrificial change in Amos' daily life

Application

- 1) Amos' background should remind us of the kind of people God calls to His service**
 - a. God calls people from a variety of backgrounds
 - b. It's tempting to think – God only calls those with special giftings or great talent to serve Him in meaningful ways
 - i. Yet – all throughout Scripture we discover God doing extraordinary things through ordinary faithfulness
 - c. Amos' ministry demonstrates what happens when there is a willingness to obey God and His Word

- 2) Many in the church may object to God using them because they feel inadequate**
 - a. Doesn't God know my background?
 - b. Doesn't God know I lack the credentials?
 - c. Doesn't God know what I struggle with?
 - d. Truth – everyone God uses is inadequate
 - i. John 15:5

- 3) What makes Amos' ministry extraordinary was not what Amos had accomplished, but what God was doing through his life**

Unprecedented Times

1) In the introduction, we are given a general and a specific timeline for when Amos' ministry took place

- a. General – Uzziah and Jeroboam
 - i. Uzziah – about 792-740BC
 - ii. Jeroboam – about 793-753BC
- b. Specific – 2 years before the earthquake
 - i. Earthquake's were common in this area due to the Jordan rift Valley fault line
 - ii. However – this earthquake must have been significant
 - 1. It was referenced to as a marker of time – 1:1
 - 2. It was recalled some 200 years later in Zechariah 14:4,5
 - 3. Archeological evidence attests to the fact that a large earthquake took place in that area and dates it around 750BC

2) Given the details of the timing of Amos' ministry – it tells us of the setting in which he ministered

- a. Time of national disunity
 - i. 931 – northern tribes of Israel rebelled against King Rehoboam, Solomon's son
 - 1. Split the monarchy
 - ii. North had 10 tribes and was called Israel
 - iii. South had 2 tribes and was called Judah
 - iv. Since the split – the two kingdoms had a turbulent relationship
 - 1. Periods of civil war and unrest, Uzziah's father and Jeroboam's father were at odds with each other
 - 2. At times there was some cooperation
 - v. All in all – there was great division among God's people
- b. Time of military superiority
 - i. At this time – the "powers" in the ANE had weakened or were preoccupied with other matters
 - 1. Assyria had defeated Syria – Israel's biggest rival
 - 2. Assyria had to then withdraw to deal with other matters closer to home
 - 3. Egypt was being dealt with by others
 - ii. During the time of Amos – Israel was experiencing strong national security
 - iii. Under King Jeroboam – Israel was able to expand its borders back to Davidic-Solomonic size and defend it
- c. Time of economic prosperity
 - i. Having control over trade routes – Israel's economy was booming
 - 1. Commerce thrived
 - 2. Upper middle class was established
 - 3. Expensive homes were being built
 - 4. Luxurious lifestyles emerged
 - ii. This was a time of great economic height for the northern kingdom

d. Time of spiritual apathy

- i. The peace and prosperity the people experienced produced a false sense of “security”
 1. Rather than take spiritual inventory – Israelites assumed because they experienced blessings all must be well
- ii. The sense of abundance produced an atmosphere of materialism and carelessness in regard to worshipping God
 1. Idol worship abounded
 - a. Already was, but here falsely assumed God accepted it because of prosperity
 2. Rich were oppressing the poor as they lived lives of luxury
 - a. Opposite of what God’s Word taught
 - b. Lack of “love of neighbor”
 3. Social injustice increased
 4. Baal worship took precedent
 - a. We learn from Hosea that Baal was the fertility god
 - b. People believed he made women, land, and animals fertile
 - c. Baal worship encouraged sexual acts and sensual behavior
 - d. Israel worshipped money, sex, power, and prosperity

3) Amos was addressing a nation who was at the pinnacle of political and economic prosperity and yet they were at a low place spiritually

- a. From a human perspective – everything appeared successful
- b. From a Divine perspective – they have rebelled in their spiritual apathy and worship

Application

1) Warning – Don’t let your prosperity conceal spiritual poverty

2) Amos could be a direct message to America and American Christians

- a. We have great economic growth
 - i. Largest GDP in the world – exceeds 30 trillion dollars annually
 - ii. Average household - \$83,000
 - iii. We have more access to food, transportation, healthcare, and technology than any other generation
 - iv. We are less than 5% of the worlds population, yet produce ¼ of the world’s economic output
 - v. Yet – our prosperity has yet to produce contentment
- b. We have great military security
 - i. Strongest military power this world has every known
 - ii. Military budget exceeds 850 billion - more than the next several nations combined
 - iii. 1.3 million active-duty military personnel
 - iv. Yet – conquering the world cannot conquer our spiritual fallenness
 - v. Prov. 21:31

- 3) Israel's downfall was not because they lacked prosperity – it was because they lacked Godliness**
- a. We are following the same route
 - i. Sin is celebrated publicly
 - ii. Bible is eradicated personally
 - iii. Jesus is repositioned in priority
 - b. Prosperity can be a blessing from God, but when it replaces dependency on God, it becomes a path of destruction

Unsavoury Task

- 1) What was the Amos to do as he ministered in this setting?**
 - a. It is clear that Amos was specifically tasked by God to call out their sin and warn them of judgment – 7:15
 - b. The Lord sent Amos to warn the norther kingdom that their time of prosperity was coming to an abrupt end
 - i. It was about to be replaced with national calamity as God judges their willful sin
- 2) “The purpose of Amos was to call the prosperous and materialistic northern tribes under Jeroboam II to repentance of their sins.” – Norman Geisler**
 - a. This life of rebellion against God was not sustainable
- 3) Main message of Amos?**
 - a. 4:12 – prepare to meet thy God
 - b. Prepare – get ready, make ready
- 4) Notice Amos’ message started where Israel first derailed – 1:3**
 - a. The Word of God
 - b. The people were in desperate need of turning a listening ear back to the voice of God in His Word
- 5) Point out – Amos continually used the covenantal name of God in his book**
 - a. Reminder as to who God really is – the exclusive, righteous, jealous God of all
- 6) The unsavoury message of Amos was to that the northern kingdom was about to receive chastisement and needed to repent**
 - a. Not a popular message – but a needed one

Closing

- 1) You and I need to hear the same words today**
- 2) Israel was so blinded by their prosperity, they failed to take accurate assessment spiritually and drifted into spiritual apathy**
 - a. Are we asking the hard questions?
 - i. Have I turned a deaf ear to God’s Word and listened to my flesh and the world?
 - ii. Have I let comfort and prosperity blind me to Godly priorities?
 - iii. Do I find my security in earthly things?
 - iv. Am I serving the Lord and ministering the Gospel as I am called to do?