

Amos – Sermon 5 – The Real Housewives of Samaria – Amos 4:1-3

Intro:

1) Our culture has become fascinated with reality TV

- a. What's interesting to me – some of the highest grossing, most-popular shows aren't about heroes, inventors, statesmen, or people making a difference....
 - i. They're about wealthy people living extravagant lifestyles, chasing pleasure, creating drama, and treating conflict as entertainment
- b. One of the best-known franchises is The Real Housewives
 - i. High-grossing reality TV – estimated around 1 Billion
 - ii. Averages between 400,000-1,000,000 live viewers per episode
- c. The appeal is simple: self-indulgence, status, drama, and lives marked by pride, conflict, and excess

2) What's interesting – nearly 2,800 years before reality TV ever existed, the prophet Amos described a remarkably similar scene

- a. Amos begins preaching against the capital city of Israel, Samaria
- b. What's fascinating – he doesn't just rail on the politicians, priests, or businessmen
 - i. In Chapter 4 – Amos begins to address the affluent housewives of Samaria
- c. These women lived in comfort while others living in poverty
 - i. They lived in excess while others scraped by
 - ii. They pursued pleasures while ignoring righteousness
 - iii. They demanded more while the needy received less
 - iv. Their homes became places of self-indulgence rather than a space which encouraged Godliness
- d. These women weren't merely enjoying God's blessings, they had allowed those blessings to become idols
 - i. Their pursuit of God was replaced by a pursuit of comfort
 - ii. Instead of encouraging their homes to righteousness, they lead in example of self-indulgence

3) What makes this passage a great challenge to us – Amos is not merely addressing the sins of a few wealthy women – he is exposing what happens whenever the pursuit of pleasure becomes the purpose of life

- a. The issue here is bigger than wealth
- b. The issue here is bigger than these women
- c. This issue is a heart issue and the outcome of turning from the Word of God

4) Sentence – when pleasure becomes our god, people become tools, families become disoriented, worship becomes empty, and judgment becomes inevitable

5) Sermon: The Real Housewives of Samaria

- a. Overall test – Chp 4
 - i. Breakdown:
 - 1. The Pursuit of Pleasure
 - 2. The Pretense of Piety
 - 3. The Persistence of Pride
- b. Text – 4:1-3
- c. This morning we are going to read Amos' sermon on the "Pursuits of Pleasure"
 - i. Look at it through 3 lenses:
 - 1. The Portrait
 - 2. The Problem
 - 3. The Punishment

The Portrait – V1a

- 1) You'll note – once again Amos issues the prophetic call of attention – “Hear this word”**
 - a. Essentially saying – Listen to this
 - b. In each instance (3:1,4:1,5:1) – the verb is an imperative – a command
 - c. IOW – Amos is commanding attention

- 2) After the opening command – Amos issues arguably one of the most misunderstood expressions in his prophetic messages**
 - a. The major question that revolves around this expression is – what exactly was Amos getting at by calling these women cows?
 - b. Seek to clarify through answering some questions

- 3) Q – Why would Amos even use this kind of imagery?**
 - a. Amos was an agricultural man, a rancher – the agricultural imagery would be both well-known and readily available
 - b. As we will see – this imagery would have been understood easily by the receiving audience
 - i. This phrase would have immediately painted a portrait in the Israelite mind as to the nature of these Samarian women
 - c. It may not have gained Amos affection, but it sure would have gained him attention
 - i. Regardless of how one understands this phrase, and regardless of time period – I don't know of any woman who takes kindly to being called a cow

- 4) Q – Did Amos use this imagery negatively – as a reference to their weight?**
 - a. No – Amos was not body shaming these women
 - i. Given the context and application – it does not appear that Amos was sing this phrase as a dig to their weight
 - b. However – in many cultures, plumpness was seen as a sign of wealth, status, and affluence
 - i. Gained weight because you could afford to eat a lot and didn't have to do hard laborious work
 - ii. So, in one sense, it would be a statement about their weight to a degree
 1. But it was meant to convey the idea – they were not struggling

- 5) Note the audience Amos addresses here**
 - a. Kine – Hebrew word for female cow/heifer
 - b. Using this word was intentional – Amos is addressing the women of Samaria right now
 - c. Notice – he doesn't call them lions, wolves, beasts, or sheep
 - i. He calls them cows – an imagery of consumption and excess driven by self-satisfaction

6) Q – what was the point of this phrase?

- a. Cultural insight – Bashan
 - i. A region just east of Sea of Galilee
 - ii. Famous throughout the ANE for its agricultural richness
 - 1. Volcanic soil
 - 2. Lush pastures for grazing
 - 3. 40' rainfall yearly
 - 4. Boasted of great cattle, well-fed, high-quality
 - iii. Bashan was often referenced to in the Bible for its richness of agricultural resources
 - 1. Jerm. 50:19, Micah 7:14, Ps. 22:12, Ez. 29:18. Deut. 32:14
- b. Calling the women “cows of Bashan” was not just meant to portray simple cattle – it was meant to give a portrait of pampered, fatted, well-fed, luxurious cows
 - i. They lived lives of ease and excess
 - ii. Amos is saying – You’ve become like the pampered cows that graze at Bashan
- c. The misunderstood view of self is amazing here
 - i. The women viewed themselves as elegant, luxurious, and desirable
 - ii. God called them overfed livestock

7) Notice the added emphasis of their lifestyle – “that are in the mountains of Samaria”

- a. This geographical mention is important because it seems mismatched
 - i. How can they live in the mountains of Samaria if they are cows of Bashan?
- b. Archeologists have uncovered a variety of “Samaria ivories”
 - i. Extensive collection of luxurious pieces – panels, decorative furnishings, furniture, etc.
- c. In the literal sense – these women lived in ivory houses in the mountain areas of Samaria
- d. In a figurative sense – the wealthy built elaborate houses in elevated land which would have “looked down” upon the poor and needy in the valleys
- e. This geographical addition was a spiritual statement

Application

1) The tragedy of a fattened cow is that it can mistake its life of prosperity for safety

- a. Ill – loading up food in a cattle trailer
- b. Reality – the abundance is preparing them for slaughter
- c. The cows of Bashan live lives of abundance because they were headed for slaughter
- d. Amos being a rancher would know this
 - i. Part of calling them “cows of Bashan” was a statement as to where their sin was taking them
 - ii. WWW – “Their sins were fattening themselves up for the coming slaughter!”

2) Wrong and ungodly pursuits have a way of making us feel secure while quietly leading us toward destruction

- a. Prov. 14:12 – “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”
- b. A dangerous effect of sin is that it not only hardens our hearts – it blinds our vision
 - i. It convinces us that comfort means we’re okay with God
 - ii. Earthly success means God is pleased
 - iii. Judgment didn’t come today – so it never will

3) Takeaway – outward prosperity is not the sign of inward righteousness

- a. This is a call to check ourselves – are we aligned with God’s Word

The Problem – V1b

1) After using such a vivid portrait, Amos moves swiftly into addressing the problem

- a. Oppress the poor – crush the needy – say to their master...
- b. IOW – The portrait was used to expose the problem
- c. You'll note – this is the 2nd time Amos addresses how Israel has treated the poor
 - i. 2:6

2) Textual insight

- a. Oppressed – mistreat, defraud, extort, denotes a continual exploitation
- b. Crush – the break or smash – refers to breaking something into pieces
- c. Oppressed speaks of the process, crush speaks to the result
- d. IOW – these women were not simple neglecting the poor and needy – they were exploiting them for their own gains
- e. By using two different words to refer to the same thing – Amos is heightening the intensity of their gross mistreatment

3) Understand what the issue here is

- a. The problem was not that these women were rich or had influence
- b. The problem was that the wealth and prestige they gained was done by ignoring God's commands about treatment of neighbor and instead oppressing and crushing them to get ahead
 - i. They did all this while living a life of extravagance and surplus

4) Notice – V1c

- a. Textual insight
 - i. Master – Heb. Adon - Lord, owner, ruler, commander
 - 1. Term applied, in earthly relationship, to that of a husband – Gen 18:12
 - ii. Bring – imperative – a command
- b. IOW – the women were issuing commands to their husbands – ordering them around like their own servants
- c. Picture – rather than honoring their marriage and husband's leadership, they upended the home by revolting against their own husbands
 - i. "master" intentional play on words – the women were acting in charge

5) Cultural insight

- a. In ANE custom, as well as Biblical custom (Prov. 31) – the woman of the home had much management over the affairs of domestic life
 - i. Ref. in Titus 2:5
- b. There's nothing sinful or unbiblical about a woman managing her home well
- c. The problem here – a challenge of God's design, husband leadership, and a manipulation of a husband's responsibility in order to keep living a luxurious life
 - i. Bring us to drink – keep financing my lifestyle, even though it is wrong and who cares how you get the wealth
- d. IOW – Pleasure became more important than righteousness

Takeaways

1) Amos never condemned wealth

- a. The Bible is full of wealthy righteous people
 - i. Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Job, David
- b. The sin here is obtaining and enjoying wealth in an unrighteous manner
 - i. Ignoring God's Word
 - ii. Mistreatment of the poor
 - iii. Idolatrous lifestyle

2) God's design for the home and family matter

- a. Its fascinating - Amos includes the domestic disorder that was occurring
- b. The point is plain – the husbands abandoned their spiritual leadership responsibilities
 - i. Instead of leading the home in a righteous manner – they have houses of luxurious disorder
 - ii. Important – both husband and wife are guilty here
- c. Further – even though Amos doesn't mention children – they are the silent victims here
 - i. They see everything that is being modeled – it affects them
 - ii. Truth – what the parents model becomes the next generations norm
- d. The home – in Scripture – is to be a place of Godly discipleship with physical and spiritual maturity
 - i. Deut. 6, Ps 78
- e. What happened here – all that was abandoned for comfort, luxury, and self-satisfaction
- f. Sentence – whatever ungodly thing drives the home will become the stronghold idol of the next generation
- g. Why is it so important for Amos to address this?
 - i. It not only effects the home, it effects society
 - 1. 5th commandment
 - ii. Long before the breakdown of society, there is a breakdown of worship in the home

The Punishment – V2-3

1) After giving the portrait and explaining the problem – Amos moves to the Punishment

- a. It's tempting to think of these issues as "small matters" but as we read – God deals with them in a scathing, absolute, and consequential manner

2) "The Lord GOD hath sworn by His holiness"

- a. Holy – to be other or different
 - i. Applied to man – consecrated and dedicated to God – not common
 - ii. Applied to God – refers to His exceedingly, eternal otherness
 - 1. God is not His creation, He is not man, He is not an idol
- b. For God to swear by His holiness was an absolutely certainty of outcome
 - i. God's holiness prohibits Him from telling a lie
 - ii. "God's holiness is core to His very being, and so here God swore by His own existence." – D. Guzik

3) "The days shall come upon you"

- a. Which day? The day of slaughter/butcher day

4) V2 hooks and fishhooks

- a. Reference to the coming Assyrian invasion and defeat (3:11-15)
- b. Assyrians were the terrorists of their day
 - i. Would lead their captives away with hooks through the nose or lips
 - ii. Multiple Assyrian reliefs depict this

5) Imagery is ironic

- a. The women who demanded luxury will lose it all
- b. They feast well now but will be led away like livestock
- c. The houses, walls, and security they built will have breaches
- d. The women who once reclined in luxury will march, single file into exile

6) This happened – 722BC – Assyrians destroyed Samaria and lead captives away into exile

Takeaways**1) Sin takes you further than you intend to go**

- a. Note the progression
- b. The women wanted:
 - i. Comfort, luxury, wine, ease
- c. The women received:
 - i. Hooks, captivity, humiliation, and exile
- d. The destination of sin is never where the sinner intended to go

2) God's patience is not God's permission

- a. These women lived lives of luxury for years
 - i. No judgment, invasion, or consequence
- b. Their conclusion – God doesn't care how I live
- c. Then – Amos 4
- d. Never mistake God's delay for God's approval

3) Earthly comfort is a poor substitute for eternal security

- a. These people had it all – money, status, influence
- b. Yet – in a moment, it was all gone
- c. What shall it profit a man?
- d. It's possible to be rich in possessions and bankrupt toward God
 - i. Q- what's in your account?