

Amos – Sermon 11 – A Righteous Response to Rebellion – Amos 7:1-9

Intro:

1) We live in a Christian culture that is infatuated with God's goodness

- a. God is good, God is great – kid's prayer
- b. God is good...All the time
- c. Goodness of God – song

2) Fact – God is good

- a. Ps. 119:68
- b. Ps. 100:5
- c. Nahum 1:7
- d. God does not merely do good things – He is good
- e. Goodness is not simply something God gives – It's Who He is

3) Problem with humanity and our society when it comes to the goodness of God – they only want to see it from one side

- a. God's goodness is two-sided
- b. One side – God is good so He gives goodness – James 1:17
- c. Other side – God is good and cannot tolerate evil
 - i. God, in His goodness, must punish sinfulness or else He really isn't good
 - ii. Illustration:
 - 1. A judge who never sentences evil people – not good
 - 2. A parent who never says no, punishes, or corrects a child – not good
 - iii. If God lets sinful rebellion continue without any correction, judgment, or discipline – is He good?

4) Why are we talking about the goodness of God?

- a. Israel has been a recipient of God's goodness in His good givings to them
 - i. 2 Kings 14:25
- b. God has shown them goodness by raising up prophets which they ignored, rearing up their young men to be Nazarites, which they despised
- c. God showed them goodness by sending Amos
 - i. For multiple chapters now, Amos has addressed their rebellion, called out their sinfulness, and warned of God's judgment if they don't repent
 - ii. God has shown them goodness through warnings and time

5) In chapter 7 a shift takes place – we see the other side of God’s goodness

- a. In chapter 7, Amos interrupts his sermons to deliver visions God gave him for Israel
 - i. Note the change – Amos 6:8,14 “saith” VS 7:1 “shewed”
- b. There’s a total of 5 visions that span Amos 7-9
 - i. Three visions are seen in chapter 7
- c. These vision display the harmonious picture of God’s judgment on Israel because of their continues rebellion
- d. Essentially – God is portraying to the people that He will judge them

6) God has graciously warned Israel of their rebellion and in chapter 7 we see the response of God to their persistent rejection of His goodness

- a. God was good in warning them of their sin – in chp 7 we see He is good in exercising judgment over their sin

7) The question before us here – what have we done with the warnings and corrections God, in His goodness, has sent our way through His Word, is Spirit, and His preachers?

- a. Sermon – A righteous response to rebellion
- b. Text: Amos 7:1-9

God issues a Judgment that Devours – V1-3

1) Amos' visions start with the devouring judgment of God

- a. What Amos sees leaves him astonished
 - i. Behold – Look! Now! It's an expression of amazement – a word used to draw attention to detail
 - ii. IOW – You don't want to miss this

2) Notice – the text makes sure we understand it is God that is forming this judgment

- a. Formed – to fashion, to frame, to produce, to shape
 - i. It's a Hebrew word used in direct connection to a potter forming clay
 - 1. Root verb means – to mold
 - 2. Particle form literally means – potter
- b. IOW – Amos does not merely see this judgment of locust appearing – He sees God forming them for this specific occasion
- c. The Hebrew construct here depicts the action is in progress – Amos is watching the Lord prepare this swarm

3) Why is this detail important to understand?

- a. The locust are not some freak of nature taking place
- b. This isn't chalked up to some random devastation that comes every couple years
- c. This is presented as the Sovereign God exercising His sovereignty over creation to render judgment upon a rebellious people

4) This would have been a terrifying reality for the Israelite people

- a. Grasshopper – refers to the locust or swarm of locust
 - i. Not a reference to the small green hopping insect in our backyards
 - ii. This is a reference to the plant-devouring locust of the ANE

5) A swarm of locust may not seem like a big deal to you and I, but to an agrarian society – this was a devastating, crop-destroying, economy shaking insect

- a. The imagery here would have communicated economic and agricultural catastrophe

6) Locust plagues have been known to decimate vegetation

- a. Report – 1915 – locust swarmed in the region that Israel now resides
 - i. Eyewitness – swarmed for 5 days and darkened the skies
- b. So devastating were the swarms – God used them as a plague against Egypt – Ex. 10:12

7) Understand – for Israel, this would not have only been an agricultural problem – this would have been a national crisis

- a. Israel's economy depended directly upon the land and what it could produce
- b. A massive swarm of locust would have decimated vegetation, destroyed crops, and depleted needed resources
- c. A locust swarm didn't simply mean less food at the markets – it meant national survival crisis
- d. No crop – no food – no animal feed – weakened livestock – lost income – famine

8) This locust judgement wasn't arbitrary – it was a fulfillment of God's covenantal word He gave Israel

- a. Deut. 28:38,42
- b. Amos' audience would not have simply heard "an agricultural disaster is coming" they would have heard "covenantal judgment is upon us"

9) Note the timing of this judgement and how devastating this would have been

- a. 1c
- b. After the king's mowings
 - i. Refers to the king's levy or tax
 - ii. King would have taken the 1st and early cuttings of the land to supply the needed food for his kingdom, counselors, and military
 - iii. IOW – the land was already harvested once, they are nearing the end of the season and last possible growths
- c. It was the latter growth
 - i. Refers to the people's crops
 - ii. This would have been the grain, grass, and produce that supplied the people and their animals
- d. The scene indicates
 - i. The locust would not arrive after everything was harvested, but before
 - ii. The rains have come, all seed has been sown, the plants are starting to sprout
 - 1. Locust arrive in swarm to devour
 - iii. The locust would arrive at the precise timing when their destruction would hurt the most
- e. "Food for the locust meant famine for the people"

10) Further – this wasn't just loss of vegetation – note V2

- a. Grass of the land
- b. This wasn't just threatening someone's garden – this would have disrupted the economic infrastructure of the nation
- c. Q – how much would they eat?
 - i. V2 – made an end of eating
 - ii. IOW – as much as they wanted until they were finished

11) Knowing the nation would die if this vision became a reality – Amos intercedes for the people

- a. “Though Israel was unrepentant, though her guilt was overwhelming, and though the punishment was just, Amos nevertheless pleaded with God not to bring this punishment on the nation.” – Sunukjian
- b. Notice – Amos doesn’t simply say, “stop the locust” he prays “FORGIVE”
 - i. Important word – it recognizes that the real problem wasn’t the insects – it was the heart
 - ii. Israel didn’t need agricultural relief – they needed Divine forgiveness
 - iii. Forgive – to pardon, to spare
 - iv. Amos is not simply praying for their circumstances to improve – he is praying for grace and mercy

12) Notice Amos’ question – by whom shall Jacob arise?

- a. How can they stand – how shall they arise from this?
 - i. Ans – they could not
- b. Amos is recognizing Israel’s inability to survive this judgement
- c. Why this question?
 - i. For he is small
 - ii. Irony – Amos has spent sermons exposing Israel’s prosperity, luxury, pride, and perceived greatness
 - 1. But he exposes the reality – they are small before an Almighty God

13) Honoring Amos’ intercession – God relents

- a. Raises a question – what does it mean for God to repent of something?
- b. Depending on the context – the word can mean:
 - i. To be moved with pity and compassion
 - ii. To relent
 - iii. To change one’s mind or change a course of action
- c. When used of God the word DOES NOT mean God has made a mistake and therefore must repent
 - i. Numb. 23:19
 - ii. 1 Sam. 15:29
 - iii. The Scripture explicitly forbids that type of interpretation
- d. The distinction that needs to be made is between God’s unchanging character and purposes and God’s real responses within His covenantal relationships
 - i. For instance – Jer, 18:7-10
 - ii. Evidently, Amos’ intercession was counted as the appointed means by which God withheld this judgement
 - iii. Q – what does it mean for God to repent of something LIKE THIS?
 - 1. Ans – Amos’ intercessory prayer on behalf of God’s people who are but small
- e. Don’t miss this – It shall not be
 - i. IOW – Judgment was still coming, however, through Amos’ intercession, this specific judgment would be withheld

God issues a Judgment that Destroys – V4-6

1) The 2nd vision God showed Amos was that of a consuming fire

- a. In some ways this second vision is much like the 1st
 - i. Both begin with what God has showed Amos
 - ii. Both judgments result in the land being destroyed
 - iii. Both contain Amos' intercession
 - iv. Both reveal the Lord relenting of His expression of judgment

2) In this 2nd vision Amos sees the Lord issuing a judgment of fire

- a. Some commentators argue over what "type" of fire this refers to
 - i. Some say it is molten lava pouring out of the earth by how its described
 - ii. Some say it is a scorching, blazing middle eastern heat that dries up the water and burns all vegetation
 - iii. Others – it is a supernatural fire God designed specifically to devour both land and sea
- b. What is clear – the Lord is the Source of this fire and this fire would have wreaked massive devastation on the land

3) Notice – unlike the locust who would have devastated the crop – this fire reaches all the way to the waters of the deep

- a. Devoured – to consume, to destroy
- b. Great deep – refers to the depth of the oceans
 - i. Same word used in Gen. 1:2
- c. "The fire devoured the waters underground and "was eating up" vegetation above ground" – Paul House

4) Here Amos is not simply saying – the crops and trees will burn

- a. He's revealing that this fire will consume even the water
- b. This vision shows the intentionally unnatural aspects of this fire
 - i. Water is used to extinguish fire
 - ii. However – this fire extinguished the water
- c. IOW – the people would not have been able to put this fire out
 - i. Lit. – would not have enough water to quench it

5) With flames unchallenged – this fire would have destroyed the land

- a. Again – this would have had a massive negative impact on the Israelite society
 - i. No water – no refreshment or sustainability for crops of livestock
 - 1. Oxen and mules could not get relief
 - ii. Crops would burn up – no food available
 - 1. People would have turned to the waters for sea life – but waters are dried up
- b. This pictures a great long famine in the land

6) Note – Amos' intercession differs slightly

- a. V2 forgive
- b. V5 – cease
- c. A difference worth noting
 - i. Indicates whatever devastation Amos saw – it was so great all he could plead was Stop!
- d. Amos gives the same reason for withholding this judgment
 - i. Israel would not survive this!
 - ii. Amos doesn't say – they don't deserve this or that God's judgment is unfair
 - 1. He appeals to God's compassion on His people
 - iii. Amos knew he couldn't defend Israel's righteousness – rather he appeals to God's mercy

God issues a Judgment that Detects – V7-9

1) We read a turning point in V7-9 when it comes to these visions

- a. Locust show us judgment devouring
- b. Fire shows us judgment destroying
- c. Plum line shows judgment deserved
- d. Key difference – the first 2 judgements show instruments of destruction, the 3rd vision reveals an instrument of inspection
 - i. In short – God is revealing Israel’s crookedness and their earned judgment

2) The third vision – God holding a plum line on a wall

- a. Q – what is a plum line?
 - i. Masonry tool used to establish the vertical straightness of a wall
 - ii. It creates an objective vertical line to measure off of
- b. The beauty of a plum line – it doesn’t negotiate with the wall
 - i. The wall either meets the standard or fails
- c. The plum line doesn’t make the wall crooked, it reveals what crookedness is present

3) Notice – God is standing upon the wall

- a. Stood – the be stationed, to be firm, to be established
- b. IOW – God has taken His stand
 - i. The picture is not of God causally passing by, but God fixed in inspection of Israel’s crookedness

4) Don’t miss this – God originally built this wall with a plum line

- a. So the vision is that of the builder returning to inspect the wall is see if it is still upright
- b. What does the wall picture – Israel
 - i. Gos formed Israel, gave them the Law, revealed His standard, established them in the land, manifested His presence to them
 - ii. He build them vertically right – with Himself

5) Notice God asks Amos a question – V8

- a. Amos answers simplistically
- b. Once the prophet identifies the tool, God gives the significance
 - i. Essentially – what do you see – now let me tell you what it means

6) Q – what is the plum line God is referencing?

- a. Reality – we aren’t explicitly told
- b. Implicitly – it is a reference to His Word
 - i. Deut. 6:17
 - ii. Deut. 28
 - iii. Josh. 1:7
 - iv. Ps. 1
- c. Israel was to live by and live out the Word of God – which they failed to do

7) One of the most terrifying phrases in the text – I will not again pass by them any more

- a. IOW – I am no longer going to withhold judgment and spare them
 - i. God spared the 1st and 2nd judgement – but judgment is coming
- b. Notice – Amos remains silent
 - i. He knows Israel is deserving
 - ii. Judgment has been rightly measured and detected

8) V9 indicates what areas caused them to fail the inspection

- a. Their hypocritically worship and their ungodly leadership
- b. Note – this destruction was not total devastation like that of the 1st two visions
 - i. Implies there is a remnant able to be left over
 - ii. Maybe why Amos didn't intercede

A Judgment that Demands

1) 5 L's from this text

2) Listen to God's Word

- a. Don't ignore God's Word until its warnings become your reality
- b. Israel couldn't plead ignorance
 - i. God gave them His Word – Deut 28
 - ii. He sent prophets and Amos – Amos 4:9 “yet ye have not returned unto me”
- c. God's warnings are an expression of His mercy – don't despise His warnings and be surprised by the consequences
- d. The proper response to Scripture – hear it, admire it, agree with it, and allow it to transform your life

3) Love God's people

- a. This is for God's leaders – leaders must love God's people enough to pray for them and preach to them
- b. Amos has preached some hard messages to Israel – yet when he sees judgment coming – he doesn't fold his arms and say, “ They deserve it”
 - i. Rather he intercedes
 - 1. V2 – for give
 - 2. V5 – stop
- c. A faithful leader doesn't just thunder against sin, he warns the sinner because he loves the sinner
- d. All throughout Scripture – God's leaders interceded
 - i. Abraham with Sodom and Gomorrah – Gen 18
 - ii. Moses repeatedly stoop in intercession for Israel
 - iii. Sameul gathered Israel and prayed for them – 1 Sam. 7:5
- e. Sentence – those entrusted with God's people should speak to people about God and speak to God about the people

4) Labor in prayer

- a. Never underestimate what God may do through intercessory prayer
 - i. Amos prays twice and twice the text says – The LORD repented for this”
- b. Some of you need to keep on praying for that person
 - i. Remember – when you cannot reach their heart – you can still reach the throne
- c. Some of you are here needed to respond to prayers made specifically for you
 - i. It' no accident you are here today – you need to respond

5) Learn from God's patience

- a. Don't mistake God's delayed judgment for God's approval
- b. Twice God relents – but in the last vision – “I will not pass by them any more”
- c. God's patience toward our sin should lead us to repentance, not continuity

6) Live by God's standards

- a. Stop measuring your life by crooked people, start measuring it by God's Word
- b. Amos 6 – the people measure their life by:
 - i. Success, prosperity, security, influence
- c. Amos 7 – God brings out the plum line
- d. God never asks you to measure your holiness against your neighbor, He calls you to adhere to His Word
 - i. 2 Cor. 10:12
- e. Some need to adhere to God's Word for salvation or revival – Gospel