

RETURN TO ME | Amos 4

Introduction:

Tonight we continue our series through Amos called “Let Justice Roll”, where we explore God’s justice and our part in His plan of salvation.

In Amos, we have seen God judge the nations who have come against his chosen people, and we are also seeing how he is judging the chosen people of Israel for their own unrighteousness.

Tonight, God wants to reveal to us his judgment through his love. The title of my message is “Return to Me”, and we will be in Amos 4.

Story: I knew a man who was very prideful. He was by all accounts a religious man, involved in his church worship team and the Children’s ministry. He believed that he was living a righteous life by serving at his church and living a righteous life, but inside, his heart was torn. His pride was a veil, a mask of false identity. Inside, he was living in secret addiction, and his life was being torn apart. His college grades dropped, he isolated from relationships and, most importantly, his relationship with God became performative rather than relational.

The people of Israel were facing a similar problem. They knew their religious rites and fulfilled their offerings, but their hearts were evil. They fulfilled their religious works with arrogance, boasting about their wealth but committing sins and being unjust to the poor.

T.S. Let’s read Amos 4...

Text: Amos 4

¹Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria,
you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy
and say to your husbands, “Bring us some drinks!”

²The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness:
“The time will surely come
when you will be taken away with hooks,
the last of you with fishhooks.”^a

³You will each go straight out
through breaches in the wall,
and you will be cast out toward Harmon,^b”

declares the LORD.

4“Go to Bethel and sin;
go to Gilgal and sin yet more.
Bring your sacrifices every morning,
your tithes every three years. ^c
5Burn leavened bread as a thank offering
and brag about your freewill offerings—
boast about them, you Israelites,
for this is what you love to do,”

declares the Sovereign LORD.

6“I gave you empty stomachs in every city
and lack of bread in every town,
yet you have not returned to me,”

declares the LORD.

7“I also withheld rain from you
when the harvest was still three months away.
I sent rain on one town,
but withheld it from another.
One field had rain;
another had none and dried up.
8People staggered from town to town for water
but did not get enough to drink,
yet you have not returned to me,”

declares the LORD.

9“Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards,
destroying them with blight and mildew.
Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees,
yet you have not returned to me,”

declares the LORD.

10“I sent plagues among you
as I did to Egypt.
I killed your young men with the sword,
along with your captured horses.
I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps,
yet you have not returned to me,”

declares the LORD.

11“I overthrew some of you
as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.
You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire,
yet you have not returned to me,”

declares the LORD.

12“Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel,
and because I will do this to you, Israel,
prepare to meet your God.”
13He who forms the mountains,
who creates the wind,
and who reveals his thoughts to mankind,
who turns dawn to darkness,
and treads on the heights of the earth—
the LORD God Almighty is his name.

Big Idea: When God disrupts our sinful living, we must respond.

Context:

Amos is calling out the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. The Israelites have become prideful and greedy. They are religious for the sake of ritual. They have fallen into sin: they live debauched lives, forgetting the poor and the least within the kingdom. They forgot how they themselves had been oppressed.

Isn't that so true of us? We get so prideful in our piety that we ignore the needs of the oppressed, and in doing so ignore the call of Christ to love our neighbor and preach the gospel through action and righteous living.

T.S. - God, in his loving kindness, allows us to go through sufferings in life to practice surrender and trust: All things are from Him. However, our pride can cause us to wrestle with God's will for our lives.

Pride directly challenges God's will

1. In Amos 4:1-5, We see the prophet call out the evil in Israel

- a. The people of Israel were unbothered by their sinful living. In fact, verse 4 and 5 says they took pride in their religious behavior, boasting about it though they had been sinning, knowing full well what God's commandments are.
 - b. Their wealth and freedom made them arrogant: They were more concerned with their own preservation than the aid of the poor, as God had commanded in the Mosaic Law.
 - i. This evil behavior was not overlooked by God. Like animals, God was warning them that he was sending them back into captivity for their unrighteousness.
2. Isn't this the same with us? The church at large has made a show of piety. There is a new phenomenon: Performative Christianity.
- a. Instead of giving our lives fully to God, and living according to His will, we pretend to live righteous lives.
 - b. we "give", but to boast about our incomes
 - c. We serve as long as we like the leader
 - d. We don't give out of sacrifice, but out of what is left.
 - e. Romans 8:12-16 says, "[12](#)Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. [13](#)For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. [14](#)For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. [15](#)The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. ^f And by him we cry, "Abba, ^g Father." [16](#)The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."
 - i. When we testify to being God's children, we do not live as the world does. The acts of the flesh are dead and done, we are new in Jesus.

T.S. The call is to live this way. It is a way of humility and love. And when we begin to live outside of God's will, God allows pressure to return us to him.

God allows pressure to invite us to return (Hebrews 12:4-6; Proverbs 3:11-12)

1. Amos 4 makes a list of times where God allows things to happen so that the people can return to him. We see:
 - a. Famine
 - b. Drought
 - c. Pestilence

- d. War
 - e. Death
2. God reveals that the same plagues he sent Egypt have also fallen on Israel.
 3. Hebrews 12 gives us a word concerning God's character in the midst of consequence. Listen to this:
 - a. **4** In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6** because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."
 - b. **"Every warning is an invitation to return."** In light of God's character, the Lord disciplines those he loves.
 - i. We, the children of God, accept his discipline as a matter of deeper relationship, deeper growth, deeper love to the Father who loves us as his sons and daughters.
 - ii. The people of Israel were, under covenant, the chosen people of God. God's great plan of salvation was to come through them! But they observed this with prideful hearts.
 - iii. They abused their foreign neighbors. They ignored the needs of the poor, the weak and the needy.
 4. **The truth is this: God is a just God. He measures EQUALLY and his authority is sovereign.**
 - a. **But his justice has direction:** 5 times we see him say, "Yet you have not returned to me."
 - b. God's call is clear → *"Every warning is an invitation to return."* His desire is that his creation may become his children, and that all people may know the majesty of his holy name. God's judgment is for his creation to return.
 5. Lamentations 3:40 reminds us to "Examine our ways and test them, and return to the Lord."

T.S. As God judges creation, he invites us to repent of our ways and return to him.

God calls for repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

1. At the cusp of God's judgment is Jesus. His work on the cross was for us to be free from the judgment of sin and invited to a relationship with God; this relationship lasts forever and there is no one or thing in this world that can come against this supreme act of love.

- a. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”
- b. God is patient with us! He pursues us with love, but he awaits our response. God, in all his authority, desires that humanity may come to repentance for their sinful living.
- 2. Amos 4 is a reminder that God is sovereign.
 - a. In his kingdom, the desire is that all people would come back to Him.
- 3. God is patient with us! All the suffering, all the pain, all the loss in this world, though not always what God wills for us, should always point us back to him.
 - a. Story: ** King David and Nathan**
 - b. King David was a powerful man with a humble heart, but in a moment of laziness and control, he took a man’s wife, sent the man to die in battle, and destroyed a family. The prophet Nathan confronted him, and he repented.
 - i. He didn’t run from the consequences. The death of his child was a consequence of his sin. The destruction of his family was a consequence of his sin. And yet, God moved in a mighty way, and his son, Solomon, completed the task David desired the most to do: build the temple of the Lord.
 - ii. In his anguish, David prays this prayer. Psalm 51:10-12 says, **10**Create in me a pure heart, O God,and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**11**Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.**12**Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
 - iii. King David recognized his sins. There was repentance from his heart, but it came with pressure. God was not pleased with his actions, and his justice was real. But God redeemed his son, his chosen one.

T.S. This is what God is challenging us tonight...

Challenge: Heed the warnings; return to Jesus!

- 1. Run to Jesus. His way is greater. His plans are higher. His love is deep, immense, as far as the expanses of the earth. He is inviting you to follow him.
 - a. My friend, let go of your pride and your unwillingness to repent. God’s judgment is real. We may not see it lived out in this lifetime, but there is a spiritual lifetime of judgment that Jesus paid for. Run to him
- 2. The man from the beginning was me. I was that prideful man. Behind my religious behavior, I was a mess. I was stuck in a pornography addiction. I had isolated from

people. I was running away from God. But one fateful night, at a prayer meeting at Light and Life, God changed my life. He forgave me and called me to a new life with him. He broke my heart of stone and gave me a new heart.

3. God wants to do the same for you tonight. Scripture says that he stands at the door and knocks. Church, Jesus is knocking at the door right now, and he is calling you to repent.

Call to Repentance

1. If there is anyone in this room who is hearing the voice of God saying, "Come to me! I will wash your sins and change your life", please raise your hands. God wants you to respond tonight.
2. And for those of us who have been walking with Jesus, here is our challenge: Lay down your pride at the altar (Response time at the altar)