

## **Sermon Text – Sunday, July 20, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus**

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Luke 10:38-42; 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Colossians 1:15-28**

**Scripture for Message: Amos 8:1-12 “Hope of Glory”**

The Hebrew word for summer fruit is remarkably like the Hebrew word for “end.” That word carries deadly overtones and the people hearing Amos’ prophecy would probably get the connection. A basket of summer fruit is not a welcome sight for Amos. Amos’ words give a dire prediction; God will never again pass by the corrupt and the entire nation of Israel will suffer the consequences. Amos gives us the words of an angry God – these words tell us exactly why God is angry – “you trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land . . . buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling even the sweepings with the wheat.” The Lord will never forget any of their deeds.

Because of the guilt and corrupt deeds of a powerful few, God will act – God will turn feasts into mourning, and songs into lamentation. “I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.” The whole land and people in it will suffer because of the way some treat the poor and while they stick to the letter of the law, they ignore the “spirit” of the law. Amos’ words remind the people that God will act against those who harm the least of these even if it means the whole of Israel must suffer. Good times will be over. We could say that God has had enough of their nonsense.

Verse eleven and verse twelve have the grimmest consequences of all. “I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run back and forth, seeking the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.” Imagine a culture where there is no word from God, where those seeking the Lord’s justice, mercy, compassion, and grace shall not find it. It can be said that is what happened to the people of Israel, the northern kingdom, who the Assyrian armies conquered. They received the consequences of their corruption at the hands of a conquering army and are lost because they rejected or misused the prophetic word.

I don’t read, in this section of the book of Amos any words of hope – we do however know there is hope. We know God is giving the people of Israel a warning to shape up even through the words of destruction and abandonment. God, through Amos, is telling the people exactly what they did to warrant God’s wrath. God’s wrath is not, however, eternal – when we read through to the end of the book of the prophet Amos, we hear this: “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat

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their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” (Amos 9:13-15).

This scripture from the eighth chapter of Amos, when taken alone, does give a grim picture of punishment and God’s wrath. However, we need to know that corrupt unethical practices have consequences that reach beyond individuals – they can affect entire nations or entire classes of people. Amos tells us that God will act and at the same time, we can read from the New Testament letter to the Colossians that through the cross and empty tomb Jesus Christ reconciles all things to God. Consequently, our hope comes from knowing that Christ dwells in all believers. Christ’s death and resurrection restores our relationship to God and the strength of the Holy Spirit sustains us.

So, the question I am asking myself and the question you should ponder is – has modern society come to the end of hope? Have we reached that time of famine when they seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it? Some do question why God does not speak today the same way God did in biblical times. Some wonder if God speaks at all or if God has gone silent, leaving us to our own devices. We should consider that God is still speaking through prophets, but we aren’t listening. We should consider that God speaks through the written words of scripture that were not available in Amos’ time.

We should, however, also consider that “perhaps we want so badly to do things our own way that God has left us to do just that – a great punishment indeed.”<sup>1</sup> Our hope for eternity rests somewhat on the prophetic word, that is our sustenance and life. Remember Jesus’ words when Satan tempted him in the wilderness with food for his hunger – “Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” What do we do when that “bread” is taken away, when God does just what society asks and leaves us alone? What do we do when we twist the words of Holy Scripture so that they no longer give words of hope?

Good times will be over; no salvation is possible independent of the prophetic word. “Devastation caused by disease, invading armies, exile, and famine is made even worse if there is no response from God, no listener to pleas for help, no speaker to interpret God’s action, no assurance of God’s loving presence, no surviving sanctuaries or rituals or priestly functions, no hope that God will come again to make things better.”<sup>2</sup> Have “those days” arrived for us? The case could be made that yes; they have when much of this world no longer listens for or

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Richard Schlimm. “Proper 11, Amos 8:1-12, Connecting the Reading with Scripture” *Connections Year C, Vol 3*. Eds. Green, Long, Powery, Rigby. WJK. 2019. Print. 162-164

<sup>2</sup> Daniel J. Simundson. “Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah” Abingdon Press. 2005. Print. 230

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pays attention to the prophetic voice of God. When the world is no longer listening maybe the Lord remains silent.

So, tragedies aside – look again at what Amos claims are the reasons for God’s wrath – is there any correlation to events of today? Can we imagine any instances where the needy are “trampled” and the poor brought to ruin? I wonder if we looked for even a moment, we could find instances where deceit and false balances are practiced in commerce even today. Face it, we have entire courts and legal practitioners dedicated to rooting out fraudulent business practices. They wouldn’t exist if false balances and deceit weren’t prevalent in our society.

What about our observation of the “Lord’s Day” or Sabbath. A long-time member of this church, now gone, used to lament that PA no longer observed “blue laws.” For those of you too young to remember, blue laws were laws restricting commercial enterprises on Sundays. No department stores or malls would be open, convenience stores wouldn’t open, and you couldn’t make certain purchases or even buy a car on Sunday, in fact the Commonwealth of PA only recently repealed one of those laws – you can now buy a car on Sunday in Pennsylvania. The morning hours were at one time kept free for people to attend the church of their choice. These laws, most of them repealed, were initially enacted to allow for rest and religious activities on Sundays – giving the day to God. One wonders how much of our time we now reserve for God. Do we even observe a Sabbath or one full day of rest? How many of us are eager for “the new moon and the sabbath to be over” so that we may sell or conduct business? Do we think that commandment to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy no longer applies to us?

When we pull all of this into our thinking about God’s wrath in the time of Amos, imagine what the consequences would now be for us when God decides God has had enough of our nonsense. One biblical scholar tells us that, “People who claim to be believers can no longer profess belief and practice their faith without embracing the ethical responsibility of ensuring protection for the most vulnerable among God’s people.”<sup>3</sup> God opposes greed and greedy oppressive actions – God will take action and justice from God will be a corporate experience one not directed solely at the troublemakers.

Thankfully there is hope, God promises good to us, God promises a prosperous future. Even though we know there are consequences to oppression and corruption we know that God will not turn away forever. How do we know that? We have God’s word given to the prophets. Even Amos declared a time when God will restore and bring God’s people back.

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<sup>3</sup> Carol J. Dempsey OP. ““Proper 11, Amos 8:1-12, Connecting the Reading with the World” *Connections Year C, Vol 3*. Eds. Green, Long, Powery, Rigby. WJK. 2019. Print. 164-166

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We can read of restoration in Paul's letter to the Colossians – “And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him” (Col 1:21-22). Paul writes about a mystery hidden throughout the ages and generations but now revealed to his saints – that mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ is our hope – through Christ we are reconciled to God and because of the cross we can approach the throne of God boldly. We know there are consequences, but God will not turn away forever through Christ there is hope. The Lord will judge of that there is no doubt, there will be consequences for evil actions but that is not the end of the story – in the end, the time is surely coming when God will prepare a great feast for the faithful and God will welcome all believers into the eternal kingdom.

What must we do until then? Look at Psalm 15 – here's your answer.

*<sup>1</sup> O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill? <sup>2</sup> Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart; <sup>3</sup> who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors; <sup>4</sup> in whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honor those who fear the Lord; who stand by their oath even to their hurt; <sup>5</sup> who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent. Those who do these things shall never be moved.*