



Sunday Sermon: “An uncomfortable path” – Ilse Gainsford 31.7.2022



Gracepoint.SA 1 day ago

"An Uncomfortable Path" by Ilse Gainsford 31-07-2022

33:42

4 Share Copy Link Edit More

Scripture

Amos 7:7-17 and 8:1-14

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God’s word to you.

Observation

Amos 7:7-17

Now God held a plumb line to measure whether Israel was straight and true according to His standards.

This is the only place Isaac is mentioned representing the nation of Israel. The Northern Kingdom held Isaac in high esteem. Amos may be mourning for the way the Covenant between Abraham and God had been broken. Israel did not measure up and would be judged ‘with the sword’.

Amaziah was a wicked man. He was a priest in Bethel, one of the places of idol worship that had been set up in opposition to the true place of worship in Jerusalem. He sent a message to king Jeroboam accusing Amos of undermining the king and giving a message that was too difficult for the people to bear. He urged Amos to leave Bethel and return home. He told him never to utter words of prophecy again.



Spend some time in worship.

Amos responded by saying he was just a farmer, not a professional prophet, nor someone who would try to incite the people to rise up against the king. God had called him as he was going about his daily tasks of taking care of his flock of sheep and tending his sycamore trees. God had given him the words to say. Amos then prophesied to Amaziah that the disaster Amaziah wanted him to stop speaking about would happen to Amaziah himself. Amos continued faithfully to pass on God's message to the people, in spite of what Amaziah said to him.

Amos 8:1-14

In a further vision, God showed Amos a basket of ripe summer fruit. It would not stay fresh for long and would soon be thrown away. In the same way, Israel did not have much time before it will be discarded. There is a play on words here in Hebrew which does not translate into English but the gist is that the coming judgment would occur soon and would be final.

Icebreaker:

What is the most difficult conversation you have ever had when you had to stand up for what you believed was right in the face of opposition?

Application

- How would you respond to someone who said to you they thought God was a God of love and this angry God only exists in the Old Testament, not in the present day? What text/s (perhaps from the New Testament) would you use to support your response? If you can't find one at this time, be accountable to one another to discover some and report back next time you meet.
- How does the way people live today compare to the way people lived in Amos' day?
- As Christ-followers, what is the mission God is calling you to undertake, individually or as a group? What issues take place around you that you know are against God's will and way and that you know you should speak out about? How do you feel about this mission? What changes in your life-style would it involve if you follow this call? Will you say 'yes' to God, as Amos did? Why/why not?
- How do you feel about passing on an uncomfortable message to those around you about their lifestyle and the consequences that will result from it? Are you brave enough? Could it affect your relationship with your friends/family? What concerns do you have? How could the group support you? Does it help to know that God will carry you through? Why/why not?
- What is the first step you need to take to proclaim God's call to the society that surrounds you? Amos' message was 'repent and restore righteousness and justice'. Is this message applicable to your world in the 21st century?
- How will you respond to this message today? What differences would it make in what you do and say and in how you worship God and respond to both Him and your neighbour?
- Are you willing to accept the challenge? Why/why not?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time. Ask God for the wisdom and the courage to pass His message on to those around you. Pray also in regard to any other needs of the group.

Service

Be open this week to the leading of the Holy Spirit. What does He lead you to do for God that may be out of your comfort zone? Will you follow His leading – or not? What happened? Report back to the group next week.

Extras for Amos 7:1-7

Amos now saw a vision of a swarm of locusts devouring Israel's crops. This took place after the first crop had been mown so the king had taken the taxes due, but the people were left with nothing. Amos was devastated at what he saw and he pleaded with God to forgive the people. And in response to Amos' prayer God relented! (One has to ask what would have happened if Amos had not prayed in such a heart-felt way.)

Then Amos saw a vision of fire burning up the land of Israel. Once again he pleaded with God and once again God relented.

Amos 8:3-14

Amos now returned to his theme of justice and injustice. Whilst Israel made a show of keeping the festivals God had appointed, they were not genuine in their rituals. There was much corruption. God saw what was going on and how they cheated people and it made Him angry. He would not forget what they had done as they rejected Him. Amos imagined the land and the people heaving and subsiding like the River Nile in flood and drought.

Scholars vary as to whether Amos' mention of the sun and moon looks forward to the Day of the Lord or whether he is just referring to an eclipse. There have been such eclipses since the time of Amos' prophecy. Whichever it is, it will be a bitter time of great mourning. Whilst a famine of bread and a drought are dreadful, even more awful, says Amos, is a drought when people are deaf towards God and no one hears the voice of the Lord. It was not that God stopped speaking. Rather that the people stopped listening. Having rejected God's Word for a long time, they would come to a point where they could not hear His voice, even if they longed to do so. Those who worshiped idols in Israel would face an everlasting judgment.

Amos 9

In his final vision, Amos saw the Lord overseeing the judgment in the temple at the altar. God was involved even in this destruction. The doorposts and the threshold are often the strongest part of a building. When they are destroyed, the building falls. No one would escape, wherever they ran. They would be judged. The Old Testament Covenant promised blessing and curse. If Israel was obedient God would bless them (Deuteronomy 28:15, 63). If they were not, God would punish them (Leviticus 26:23-25).

Amos emphasises the sovereignty of God by using the phrase Lord God twelve times in chapters 7-9. He reminds the people who God is and how they should respond to Him. Exactly what God is building is lost in translation. But Amos continues by calling Israel a sinful kingdom. They cannot rely on the facts that God is merciful or that they are chosen. In the same way God had brought Israel out of Egypt, so He had brought the Philistines from Caphto and the Syrians from Kir. Israel should not be proud – God had done similar things for other nations. God would use Israel's exile to purify His people (not destroy them). Only the sinners will be sifted, like chaff from the grain.

In a sudden change from His message of rebuke, God now promises to restore David's royal line (in Jesus Christ) even though the Northern kingdom had rejected Him. Judgment is not for revenge but rather to

restore God's plan. Amos speaks of the tabernacle of David, rather than the house indicating that David's line was more a humble shack than a house, for it had fallen very low. God announced that even the Gentiles would be included in the house of David, which occurred with the coming of Jesus Christ. (James, the brother of Jesus, used Amos 9:11-12 at the Council of Jerusalem to show God had promised to reach out to the Gentiles to bring them into His Kingdom under the Messiah, not under Israel).

Amos' prophecies end in hope. One day Israel would experience prosperity and plenty, not as they were experiencing it at that time but in God and from God. At this time, God would restore and bless them in miraculous ways with an abundance of fine crops. People would work joyfully, with great energy. One day, Israel would no longer be exiled from their land.

Bibliography

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/amos-7/>

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/amos-8/>

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/amos-9/>