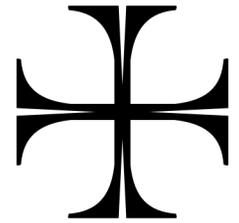


KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



Amos 7:10-17

Christians Should Never Be Ashamed of What They Believe

The Bible makes preaching pretty easy. Our text was written about 2,700 years ago. One might think that such an ancient text would be easy to dismiss as no longer applying in our 21st Century world, but the setting of Amos sounds remarkably familiar.

In our text, Amos was prophesying to the nation of Israel. This was the northern kingdom of the divided kingdom. Their king was named Jeroboam II. He was successful. The major powers of the world were not interested in Israel at the time, so Jeroboam II was able to increase the borders of Israel. Trade was booming; it was a time of economic prosperity. The threat of foreign invasion was low, so the people lived at peace. Life was good in Israel.

At the same time, the religious situation in Israel was awful. In the verses before our text, Amos had a vision in which he saw a plumb line against a wall. The line would show that the wall was straight, but the wall of Israel was not straight. They were worshipping false gods and rebelling against the Lord's will. False altars were used to worship. Unauthorized sacrifices were given. Amos preached against the social injustice of the day: the poor were taken advantage of and mistreated. Amos preached against the excessive drinking that plagued Israel. People brought offerings to God, but they did so out of routine; their hearts were not in their acts of worship.

Do you see why preaching can be easy? How hard is it to see modern-day America in the world of ancient Israel? Time has passed, we speak a different language, we are not an agricultural society, and there are countless new inventions, but humanity hasn't changed.

But it isn't just the context of Amos that hasn't changed. The details of our text sound remarkably timely. Amos preached against the sins of Israel. What was the response to his

preaching? Amaziah, the priest at Bethel (a place of false worship), went to the king and told him to make Amos stop preaching. Amaziah then went to Amos and told him to get out of Israel. He didn't want to hear about sin; but wanted to silence the messenger.

Again, not too difficult to see that nothing has changed. Our society is not interested in hearing voices that point out sin. Whether it be homosexuality, materialism, or the reality that not all gods are equal (or actually exist), our society's reaction is to call those views extreme and not worth listening to.

But the fact that human nature hasn't changed isn't really the point of this lesson. Amos' response to the opposition he faced is what we need to note. Amos said, **"I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' Now then, hear the word of the LORD."** *I didn't chose to do or say these things. I had no desire to be a prophet, but God called me. I simply repeat a message from him.*

The problem that the people of Amos' day and the people of today have isn't with believers. Amos wasn't Amaziah's problem. You are not the problem for modern culture. Unbelievers have a problem with God. That was Amos' point. God had a message for Israel that the people refused to heed.

The Supreme Court legalizing gay marriage in our society shouldn't surprise us. It simply reveals the spiritual situation in our nation. We never have been — and we especially are not now — a nation united under the true God. We are not a nation of Christians. Democracy doesn't make a Christian. Sin still runs wild in our world. The gross, public examples of sin only remind us sin's presence.

But before we join the Pharisees of Jesus' day in condemning the sins of others, let us not be naïve to the reality of sin in our own lives. Our sins may not get or need Supreme Court approval, but they are just as real as what our society produces.

Aren't we tempted to ignore parts of God's Word? Maybe not in total, but some parts don't tell us what we want to hear, so we'd rather ignore them. Maybe close communion or women in positions of authority over men in the church. Or maybe the importance of God's Word — we don't make time to hear and learn it in worship and Bible Class and our excuses wouldn't fly before God. Maybe even the gospel itself is lost to us in moment of pride. You know the moments when you think you are better than others or that you deserve God's goodness because of all you've done.

The list could go on to include the sins we commit by the words we chose to say or the movies, TV shows, and videos we watch. Even our attitudes that are not loving reflect the reality of sin in our lives.

Ignoring sin or not wanting to hear about it doesn't change the reality. Amos said in our text that it wasn't his idea to preach against the sins of Israel. He was telling the people a message from God. None of us can ignore our sins out of existence.

"Hear the Word of the LORD" people of God. Confess your sins to God. Then, in faith, look to Jesus Christ as the One who has taken your sins away. As clearly as the Bible points out sins, it always points to full forgiveness in Christ Jesus. By his death on the cross, your sin is fully atoned for. Every ounce of judgement is removed from you for it was placed on Christ. His resurrection assures you that you will live — forever. Don't let your sins burden you, for Christ has taken them away. Just as the devil lies about the reality of sin, he works to lie about the reality of forgiveness. **"Hear the Word of the LORD"** and know that your sins are forever gone through faith in Jesus.

So what are we to do as we live in a society that has all the same spiritual traits as the one that Amos preached to 2,700 years ago? Don't despair. God has safely guided his people through the tumults of this sinful world for generations. He won't stop now. His Word preserves you from the attacks of the devil and your Savior washes away the curse of your sin. And the truth is that no law passed by man changes anything about God or about what is right or wrong. While it is lamentable to watch our fellow citizens in a sprint away from God, unbelief is still unbelief. God is still God.

We need to adopt the attitude of Amos. We need to be the ones who proclaim the truth and who stand on God's Word because what our nation needs more than anything is to know the God who rules this world.

Perhaps our nation's latest foray into sin will remind us as individuals and as a congregation of the importance of **"Hear the Word of the LORD."** Only the message of the Bible that points out sins as well as pointing out God's unchanging love for the world will turn our nation around. The right person elected as the next president won't change a single heart to believe in God; neither will any new or changed law. Only the gospel message of Jesus changes hearts. You are who you are because that gospel has worked and continues to work in your heart.

Our society may not like what you have to say. They may even think they are angry with you. But you didn't "make the rules" any more than Amos did. We simply speak and live a message that is from God. Those who don't like it, who like Amaziah want to silence us, have a bigger problem than what they think of you.

Jesus sent his disciples out to share the truth they had heard from him. Christians continue to be the voice of the Savior in this world of sin. As opportunities arise, speak. Don't be ashamed and don't be afraid. God has a message for the world and in his grace can use you to share it. Amen.