

Prepare to Meet Your God
Amos 4:6-13

March 12, 2006

SERMON NOTES

A. Introduction – Scripture Readings

1. Leviticus 26:13-28 promises Israel how ...

2. Amos 4:6-13 reviews how ...

B. Five Ways God Warns His People

1. Famine or Hunger

Amos 4:6

a. for Israel, this meant

b. for us, this may mean

2. Withheld Rain or Blessing

Amos 4:7-8

a. what distinguished the Palestine from Egypt? (Deuteronomy 11:10-12)

b. for Israel, this resulted in

c. for us, this may result in (consider Malachi 3:10)

3. Hardships

Amos 4:9

a. the purpose of these, then and now, is

4. Sickness, Suffering, Bereavement

Amos 4:10

a. this was fitting for Israel because

b. can this affect the Christian (1 Corinthians 11:30)

5. Defeat

Amos 4:11

a. God showed His grace in this to Israel by

b. for us, in what ways may this occur?

C. What Happens When God's Warnings are Ignored

1. Prepare to Meet Your God

Amos 4:12

a. in Israel, this took place when

b. is this something that applies to us (see Romans 14:12)?

2. because our God is an A_____ G_____ Amos 4:13

a. Deuteronomy 10:17: He is

D. Conclusion: since these words are written to instruct me (1 Corinthians 10:11), I should ...

A. Introduction

1. Scripture Reading

- a. Leviticus 26:13–28: Before they entered the promised land, God gave these promises to Israel of how He would warn them if they were depart from worshipping Him
- b. Amos 4:6–13: Now God recounts, through the voice of Amos, how He has warned them for their apostasy

2. Warnings —{2}.

- a. Mt. Saint Helens belched gray steam plumes hundreds of feet into the blue Oregon sky. Geologists watched their seismographs in growing wonder as the earth danced beneath their feet. Rangers and state police, sirens blaring, herded tourists and residents from an ever-widening zone of danger. Every piece of scientific evidence being collected in the laboratories and on the field predicted the volcano would soon explode with a fury that would leave the forests flattened.
- b. “Warning!” blared the loudspeakers on the patrol cars and helicopters hovering overhead. “Warning!” blinked battery-powered signs at every major crossroad. “Warning!” pleaded radio and television announcers, shortwave and citizen-band operators. “Warning!” echoed up and down the mountain, and lakeside villages, tourist camps and hiking trails emptied as people heard the warnings and fled for their lives.
- c. But Harry Truman refused to budge. Harry was the caretaker of a recreation lodge on Spirit Lake, five miles north of Mt. Saint Helens’s smoke-enshrouded peak. The rangers warned Harry of the coming blast. Even Harry’s sister called to talk sense into the old man’s head. But Harry ignored the warnings. From the picture-postcard beauty of his lakeside home reflecting the snow-capped peak overhead, Harry grinned on national television and said, “Nobody knows more about this mountain than Harry and it don’t dare blow up on him... ”
- d. On 18 May 1980, as the boiling gases beneath the mountain’s surface bulged and buckled the landscape to its final limits, Harry Truman cooked his eggs and bacon, fed his sixteen cats the scraps, and began to plant petunias around the border of his freshly mowed lawn. At 8:31 a.m. the mountain exploded.

Did Harry regret his decision in that millisecond he had before the concussive waves, travelling faster than the speed of sound, flattened him and everything else for 150 square miles? Did he have time to mourn his stubbornness as millions of tons of rock disintegrated and disappeared into a cloud reaching ten miles into the sky? Did he struggle against the wall of mud and ash fifty feet high that buried his cabin, his cats and his freshly mowed lawn.

e. What happens when warning became reality? What happens when we ignore God's repeated warnings

B. Five Ways God Warns His People

1. Famine or Hunger Amos 4:6

a. "Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the Lord. (NKJV)

b. now, these people did not have white teeth

(A) because they used Crest or Colgate or whatever

(B) or from using the latest tooth-whitening process

(C) or from having them cleaned at the dentist

c. but because God had brought periods of hunger,

d. warnings of their fallen spiritual state

(A) bringing upon them dissatisfaction in their bodies

(B) so that they should recognize the dissatisfaction in their souls, a hunger for their Redeemer God

e. « but they ignored this warning and would not return »

f. in like fashion, God through His Holy Spirit

(A) when we wander away from Him

(B) will bring upon us a yearning, a spiritual hunger

(C) will we heed His warning and return?

2. Withheld Rain or Blessing Amos 4:7-8

a. "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. People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me," declares the

Lord. (NIV)

b. now one of the characteristics to the Promised Land

(A) one that distinguished it markedly from Egypt

(B) for Moses told Israel in Deuteronomy 11:10, "For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden." (NAS)

(C) ah no! Moses goes on to describe it (verses 11–12): "But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year." (NAS)

(D) this was a land where the fruit was given by God's grace, a land dependent upon God's blessing of rain

c. and God withheld that rain, held back His blessing

(A) but, in His grace and mercy, not completely

(B) for He still showed His providential care

(C) but with some inconvenience so as to warn them

d. but they ignored this warning and would not return

e. so God may withhold spiritual blessings

(A) the joy of salvation

(B) the fellowship with the saints

(C) the light of His presence

(D) so that we may return to obey Him, much as the God who does not change instructed His people through the prophet Malachi to obey Him in the matter of offerings, "... and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." (Malachi 3:10 NAS)

(E) will we heed His warning and return?

3. Hardships Amos 4:9

a. "Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, I struck them with blight and mildew. Locusts

devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me," declares the Lord. (NIV)

- b. You have probably heard the advice given to young girls that the **'way to a man's heart his through his stomach.'**", implying, I think, that men are more concerned with mere animal comforts than with the higher things of life
- c. well, you can see that the people of Israel had grown so far away from the spiritual, so deeply into the material, that God had to keep striking them where it hurt
- d. « but they ignored this warning and would not return »
- e. so, too, another way that God will chastise us
 - (A) is to put some bumps in the roads of our lives
 - (B) because it is only as we are shaken out of our own self-sufficiency and our comfort
 - (C) that we may be inclined to listen to God's voice, warning us of our loss of devotion to Him
 - (D) will we heed His warning and return?

4. Sickness, Suffering, Bereavement Amos 4:10

- a. **"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. (NIV)**
- b. there was something particularly fitting in this warning
 - (A) for they had forgotten how God redeemed them
 - (B) when they were slaves, suffering in Egypt
 - (C) by His sending plagues and pestilence against Egypt
- c. this warning was to remind them
 - (A) them that they were a redeemed people
 - (B) they had been purchased with Egypt being the price
 - (C) and they belonged to God
- d. « but they ignored this warning and would not return »
- e. God may use sickness, and even death, to warn us
 - (A) it is not limited to the Old Testament
 - (B) the Corinthians church was told that on account of the sin that had entered their lives and worship

- (C) For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. (1 Corinthians 11:30 NAS)
- (D) will we heed His warning and return?

5. Defeat Amos 4:11

- a. "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. (NIV)
- b. as final warning, defeat was sent to this self-satisfied, rich, complacent people
- c. God had used Syria and the nations round about to afflict His people Israel, letting them be defeated, letting some of them being sold away as captive slaves
- d. even in these defeats
 - (A) God spared the nation as a whole
 - (B) being ever gracious, ever loving
 - (C) continuing the opportunity for their repentance
 - (D) opening the door to reconciliation
- e. but they ignored this warning and would not return
- f. sometimes God allows us to experience defeat
 - (A) it may be in the material realm, where a promotion is denied, or a course is failed, or a job is lost
 - (B) or it may in the spiritual realm, having succumbed to some temptation because, like Peter in his denial of Christ, we don't think we need God
 - (C) God allowing these things to shock us back to Him
 - (D) will we heed His warning and return?

6. Now, any one of these is not necessarily a warning

- a. there are many other reasons that they could occur
 - (A) they may be tests of faith
 - (B) they may be so that we love the Giver above the Gift
 - (C) they may be so His strength is made perfect in our weakness, His sufficiency in our insufficiency
- b. but, if they manifest a pattern of increasing severity as they did to the people of Israel,

- (A) coming one after another
- (B) then it is time to examine what they may mean,
- (C) it is time to ignore the symptoms no longer ...

C. What Happens When God's Warnings Are Ignored?

1. "Prepare to Meet Your God" Amos 4:12
 - a. "Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel." (NIV)
 - b. God is saying, 'I am done fooling around; you are going to give me attention! Exclamation point!'
 - c. now God will cease what were but gentle warnings
 - d. now God will execute the judgement upon His people which He promised so long previously if they left Him
 - e. now God will root this people
 - (A) out of the land of promise
 - (B) out of the land which He had given to them
 - (C) out of their comfort, complacency, self-indulgence
 - (D) out of their privileged position among the nations
 - (E) to go into exile
 - f. and thus they meet their God
 - g. so must each one of us also one day meet our God
 - h. The late Lewis Grizzard, a humorist and author of many columns and books, was by his minister in the hospital. Grizzard was scheduled to have open-heart surgery the next morning. He confessed to his minister that he had not exactly been a paragon of virtue and asked if there were still time to repent. The minister looked at his watch and replied, "Yes, but I'd hurry if I were you." ^{-{3}}.
2. because, this God is an Awesome God Amos 4:13
 - a. "He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth—the Lord God Almighty is his name." (NIV)
 - b. who can stand before such a God?

- c. Job couldn't
- d. Isaiah couldn't
- e. "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God ..." (Deuteronomy 10:17a NAS)
- f. this is the God whom you and I shall have to face
- g. so we should heed His warnings
- h. we should prepare to meet our God

D. Conclusion

1. What is the warning that God is speaking to you today?
 - a. Is it, by chance, that you have been ignoring His tender invitation to salvation? Ralph Carmichael's beautiful hymn expresses Christ's invitation in these words ^{4}.

The Saviour is waiting to enter your heart—
Why don't you let Him come in?
There's nothing in this world to keep you apart—
What is your answer to Him?

If you'll take one step toward the Saviour, my friend,
You'll find His arms open wide;
Receive Him and all of your darkness will end,
Within your heart He'll abide.

(Chorus)

Time after time He has waited before,
And now He is waiting again
To see if you're willing to open the door—
Oh! How He wants to come in!

- b. or is it, that as one of God's children, you have allowed your walk with Him to grow distant and your love, cold? ... and the warning signs have begun to show
 - (A) spiritual hunger, a gnawing dissatisfaction?
 - (B) His showers of spiritual blessing dried up?
 - (C) the heavens become as brass in the midst of sickness or hardship or spiritual defeat?

- 2. Oh, if you have been experiencing the warnings of God
 - a. do not be like the children of Israel – these words were put here for our admonition (1 Corinthians 10:11)
 - b. do not wait until God is done fooling around
 - c. when He says, 'Prepare to meet your God'
 - d. will you not yield to Him today, even as we sing our closing hymn, "Something for Thee"?

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick’s database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. Mount St. Helens, from ‘Approaching Hoofbeats,’ pp. 13-14, Billy Graham – Kerux illustrations #6826
3. “I’d Hurry If I Were You” by Rev. Johnny Deans, Rev. Brett Blair’s Illustrations – Kerux illustration #5197
4. ‘The Saviour is Waiting’ by Ralph Carmichael, © 1958 Sacred Songs (a division of Word, Inc.); used by permission, CCLI 1565957.