

Sunday, Go-to-meetin' Christians
Amos 5:16-27

April 2, 2006

SERMON NOTES

A. Introduction

1. a "linear view" of history means that history has a definite
2. for the Christian, this means

B. The Day of the Lord Amos 5:16-20

1. Judgement's Death-Wail Approaches — verses 16-17 — judgement and the mourning for it will be found
2. How Can You Desire This? — verses 18-20 — the two sides of the day of the Lord are (illustrated from Hebrews 4)
 - a. it is a day when
 - b. it is a day when
 - c. what does Amos' illustration tell us about this?

C. Sin Renders Worship Meaningless Amos 5:21-24

1. Their Sacrifices Meaningless — verses 21-22 — how does God feel about religious worship that merely follows the formalities?
2. Their Praises Meaningless — verse 23 — how does God feel about beautiful, but empty, songs of praise? (Matthew 9:13, Micah 6:6)

3. God Wants Obedience – verse 24

- a. Deuteronomy 4:7-8: what did God intend to distinguish the Israelites?
- b. I Samuel 15: What is the lesson from King Saul and the sheep:

4. God Has Not Changed; what did Jesus lay down as the primary expression of obedience (John 14:15-17, 21, 23; 15:9-14, 17)?

D. God Desires Changed Lives Amos 5:25-27

1. Israel has not changed; this is evident because (see Joshua 24:23)
2. God Still Wants Changed Lives
 - a. this change comes by
 - b. our responsibility is (Ephesians 4:30 and I Thessalonians 5:19)
 - c. because He is (Romans 1:4, I Corinthians 6:19)
 - d. what does it mean when I Thessalonians 4:3 tells us what God's will is?

E. Conclusion: my feelings when I think of Jesus Christ's return are

A. Introduction

1. Any of you who have had to struggle through "Finnegan's Wake," written by James Joyce, will recall the snippets of conversation and images that form in the landlord's sleep – and perhaps, liquor – befuddled mind, that seem to go on without end and without purpose in a random fashion.
 - a. This is the notion that some people have of history ... that it just goes on in a random, meaningless fashion.
 - b. Actually, Joyce's theme seems more that history is cyclical, repeating over and over the same events and themes

2. but the philosophy of history that is presented in the Bible is neither random nor cyclical, but linear:
 - a. history has come from a definite point in the past
 - b. a point in which God acted in order to create all things
 - c. and proceeds through a series of event in which God is acting with and upon His creation
 - d. and is headed to a specific and definite consummation when God's plan in His actions will be fully achieved
 - e. and in the Bible, God discloses from time to time bits and pieces of this plan in order that you and I may change our lives
 - f. God doesn't want "Sunday, Go-to-meetin' Christians" but people with changed lives giving witness to His glory

3. the Earl of Shaftesbury lived in the 1800's —{2}.
 - a. when we hear the title Earl
 - b. we may think of someone living in decadent luxury
 - c. but he was a poor man's earl, a who man was responsible for
 - (A) reforms in the prisons and factories of England
 - (B) changes in the educational system

- (C) improvements in housing and in orphanages
- (D) an early and active supporter of the RSPCA
- (E) a man working for justice in his country
- d. and this man said near the end of his life, "I cannot think of one conscious hour in the last forty years which was not influenced by the thought of Christ's return."
- e. a man with a life changed by his knowing God's plan

4. in examining this passage from Amos, chapter 5, I will read some of the verses again from the New Living Translation, which is more of a paraphrase, for I believe that it captures in places the intention and inferences of the original Hebrew

B. The Day of the Lord Amos 5:16–20

1. Judgement's Death-Wail Approaches

- a. Therefore, this is what the Lord, the Lord God Almighty, says: "There will be crying in all the public squares and in every street. Call for the farmers to weep with you, and summon professional mourners to wail and lament. There will be wailing in every vineyard, for I will pass through and destroy them all. I, the Lord, have spoken!" (16-17 NLT)
- b. as tragedies have happened in the Middle East – suicide bombers, casualties of war – you have without doubt seen on the television scenes of mourning, the wailing of men and women for those they have lost
- c. this is the picture that Amos draws here
- d. but it is not to be in isolated instance, here and there
- e. it will involve not just the professional funeral weepers but people from every cast of life, even the farmers
- f. it will pervade the town square and country vineyard
- g. for judgement is coming to all the land

2. How Can You Desire This?

- a. yet, there were, apparently, those who said openly that they wished the day of the Lord would come

and hurry up:

- b. How terrible it will be for you who say, "If only the day of the Lord were here! For then the Lord would rescue us from all our enemies." But you have no idea what you are wishing for. That day will not bring light and prosperity, but darkness and disaster. In that day you will be like a man who runs from a lion – only to meet a bear. After escaping the bear, he leans his hand against a wall in his house – and is bitten by a snake. Yes, the day of the Lord will be a dark and hopeless day, without a ray of joy or hope. (18-20 NLT)
- c. these people had forgotten that the day of the Lord
 - (A) has two sides to it
 - (B) in the 70's we went camping in Wells Grey Provincial park in the north central part of British Columbia
 - (1) my brother-in-law was park naturalist at the time
 - (2) he always used a double-sided axe to cut the wood for the camp-fire each night during his talks
 - (3) he said a double-sided axe was actually safer than an single-sided one since you never forgot that while it was tool to do your bidding it was also a danger that could do you injury
 - (C) the Bible tells us in Hebrews 4, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Living Word of God, who as High Priest is bringing His people into the promised rest, is also the One with whom we have to deal, discerning as He does the thoughts and intents of our hearts
 - (1) the Jesus of Nazareth who died to be our Saviour
 - (2) who is returning to take His people to their eternal home prepared in the heavens
 - (3) is also Christ ascended to the right hand of God
 - (4) who will return to judge mankind
 - (5) so is described as a two-edged sword
 - (6) waging war for His people; against His enemies
- d. so, too, the day of the Lord coming upon Israel
 - (A) will, yes, result in justice on behalf of the remnant, the one in ten that will be spared as noted 2 weeks ago
 - (B) but, too, result in judgement against the wicked

(C) Amos paints a graphic picture of how certain this is

(1) perhaps it was an incident he had seen

(2) judgement is coming as surely as it came to the

(3) man who ran from the lion, only to meet a bear

(4) who ran into his house, to have a snake bite him

(D) how, then, says Amos, can those who are not right with God, be looking forward to the day of the Lord?

C. Sin Renders Worship Meaningless Amos 5:21–24

1. Their Sacrifices Meaningless; God says

a. "I hate all your show and pretense--the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings. I won't even notice all your choice peace offerings." (21-22 NLT)

b. religion – even that which follows all the procedures and rules – just does not impress God

c. when it deviates from what God has commanded, less so

d. no matter what it costs ...

e. will God pay attention to it?

2. Their Praises Meaningless; God says

a. "Away with your hymns of praise! They are only noise to my ears. I will not listen to your music, no matter how lovely it is." (23 NLT)

b. worship: gifted, talented, pleasant, beautiful, ornate ...

c. the product of study and effort

d. is it acceptable to God?

e. if it is not based on a heart relationship with Him?

f. Jesus had to confront the religious rulers of His day, those who had worked out in detail all the rules of conduct which should be followed by the man seeking to be righteous before God, and yet who missed all the point of Moses and the prophets; to these people, Jesus said, "But go and learn what this means,

'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13 NAS, Micah 6:6)

g. God wanted from these Israelites, compassion, mercy, care for the poor in their midst; what he found was oppression

3. God Wants Obedience; God says

a. "Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, a river of righteous living that will never run dry." (24 NLT)

b. in their case, sin was centred in their injustice, in their oppression of their own people, in their forsaking the law that God had given that His people were to be a witness to the nations of the righteous, just God they served

c. "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:7-8 NAS)

d. The case of Saul and the sheep as an illustration

(A) in 1 Samuel 15, we read of Saul being sent against the Amalekites to destroy them on account of their great wickedness and specifically for their harassing Israel as they came into the Promised Land

(B) now this nation was devoted to destruction

(C) that meant that they were not supposed to take plunder and booty and the spoils of war

(D) but Saul – a king who started so well and with every advantage, but ended his life so dismally after failing God time and time again – allowed the people to cull the best from the herds of sheep and cattle

(E) when Samuel came, Saul greeted him, saying, "... I have carried out the command of the Lord." (v13 NAS)

(F) to which Samuel replied, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (v14 NAS)

(G) Saul excused himself by saying these had been kept by the people so that they could be sacrificed

“to the Lord your God” – notice that ‘your’!

- (H) then Samuel spoke those words which I heard as a young person when I excused my disobedience with some supposedly good reason, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...” (vv 22-23a NKJV)

4. God Has Not Changed!

a. in order to be meaningful

- (A) our sacrificial service to God
- (B) our worship, our praise, our singing
- (C) need to be supported by obedience

b. let’s turn to John’s gospel and read some verses that Jesus spoke to His disciples after he ate the Passover with them:

c. Read John 14:15–17, 21, 23; 15:9–14, 17 ... “This is my commandment that you love one another!”

- (A) ¹⁵ “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17 NAS)
- (B) “He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.” (John 14:21 NAS)
- (C) Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.” (John 14:23 NAS)
- (D) ⁹ “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. ¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My

friends, if you do what I command you.” (John 15:9-14 NAS)

(E) “This I command you, that you love one another.” (John 15:17 NAS)

d. Jesus laid down the love commandment as the primary expression of obedience if we were to have fellowship with the Father, with the Son, with the Holy Spirit

D. God Desires Changed Lives Amos 5:25–27

1. Israel Has Not Changed, for God says

a. “Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, Israel? No, your real interest was in your pagan gods – Sakkuth your king god and Kaiwan your star god – the images you yourselves made.” (25-26 NLT)

b. after all that God had done in their midst with Moses, the man of God, you find continued idolatry throughout the books that he wrote

c. after all the victories that God had given in Canaan, you find continued idolatry as is evidenced by Joshua’s words at the end of his life, “Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” (Joshua 24:23 NAS)

d. they were still carrying with them, still serving, still worshipping gods of wood and stone that they had carried with them, the same gods from which they had served back in Mesopotamia and later in Egypt

e. and now, 700 to 800 years later, still under the pretence of worshipping Yahweh, they continued to serve idols!

f. they hadn’t changed, hadn’t really turned to God!

2. God Still Wants Changed Lives

a. the Holy Spirit,

(A) Whom Jesus promised to us

(B) as we read a few moments ago

(C) and Who came on Pentecost in fullness of power

(D) is not given in order that we may have a warm, fuzzy, religious feeling each Sunday when we attend church

- (E) but that by His power in us we should be changed
- b. this is why we are commanded
 - (A) **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** (Ephesians 4:30 NAS), and
 - (B) **Do not quench the Spirit;** (1 Thessalonians 5:19 NAS)
 - (C) for the Holy Spirit is the **Spirit of Holiness** (Rom. 1:4)
 - (D) **Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?** (1 Corinthians 6:19 NAS)
- c. God intends that being a Christian will change our lives
 - (A) **For this is the will of God, your sanctification...** (1 Thessalonians 4:3a NAS) – that is Holy Spirit’s work
 - (B) that we be a purified people testifying to God’s grace
- d. God doesn’t want “Sunday, Go-to-meetin’ Christians” – He wants people whose lives are changed by the power of His Holy Spirit, living vibrantly as a witness to God every day

E. Conclusion

1. the Day of the Lord is Still Coming

- a. for those who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour, as we have already said, it will be a day of judgement: For it is appointed ...
- b. for those who have accepted the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross, it will be a day of justice; a day in which all the wrongs of this world are corrected, made right; a day of the wiping away of all tears
- c. but still, for us all, a day of giving account of the things that we have done in our lives, whether good or bad

2. so, how are we looking forward to His Coming

- a. with fear, with trepidation?
- b. or joyfully, waiting to meet our Saviour in glory?

c. are we watching for His coming, will he find us watching?

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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. Taken from “Religion God Hates” by Rev Simon Scott, The Round Church at St. Andrew the Great (Anglican); Cambridge, England – Kerux illustrations #20439