

Sermon Notes

Easy Today's, Hard Tomorrow's  
Amos 6

April 23, 2006

A. Introduction

1. Psalm 1, Psalm 37: what is the mark of
  - a. the godless person?
  - b. the godly person?
2. in Psalm 37:35-36 the writer
  - a. once saw the godless as
  - b. but now
3. why does Jesus describe as 'happy' the people who now undergo hardships in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12; Psalms 1:3, 30:5, 37:6 are also comments on this truth)?

B. Easy Today's (for the Godless) . . . . . Amos 6:1-6

1. verse 1: to whom are these woes or warnings given?
2. verse 2: what do they not appreciate?
3. verse 3: do they accept these warnings (compare 2 Peter 3:3-4)?
4. verses 4 to 6: in the face of these warnings, what is their life-style?
  - a. the best F \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. the best F \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. the best E \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. spared no L \_\_\_\_\_

5. verse 6: and with all these they did not ...

C. Hard Tomorrow's (for the Godless) . . . . . Amos 6:7-14

1. Isaiah 57:20, Deuteronomy 28:65; what can these never know?
2. what marked these people as godless?
  - a. verse 8: their
  - b. verse 12: their
3. verses 7 and 8, what will happen to their life-style?
4. verses 9-10, 14: what will God's punishment be like?

D. Sometimes Hard Today's (for the Godly)

1. how are Christians treated? ... in this country? ... in most nations?
2. rather than be discouraged, what does this prove (as for example in John 15:19-20, 16:33)?
3. why be encouraged (1 John 4:4)?

E. There are Always Glad Tomorrow's (for the Godly)

1. Matthew 11:28, Hebrews 4:9: we are promised ...
2. Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 2:9: how do any current sufferings compare with the Christian's future?

F. Martin Luther: "a religion that gives \_\_\_\_\_, costs \_\_\_\_\_, and suffers \_\_\_\_\_, is worth \_\_\_\_\_."

A. Introduction

1. there is a contrast portrayed in the Scriptures
  - a. between the godless and the godly person
    - (A) the godless are those who do not have God in their lives, natural people rather than spiritual, despite their being religious or ethical
    - (B) the godly are those who do have God in their lives, His redeemed children, spiritual rather than natural, despite frailty and failure, walking by faith
  - b. you may have already noticed how evident this contrast is in the Psalms, even as we read Psalm 1 this morning
2. we find on the one hand the godless person described
  - a. he is the scornful who may sit in the seat of power – much as the scribes and Pharisees did in Jesus' day, sitting in Moses' seat (Matthew 23:2), but scornful of the truth that Jesus taught – for the time being he sits
  - b. or, as David describes in Psalm 37:35: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree." (AV)
  - c. yet we find that in the end, such a godless person
    - (A) is like the dust from threshing that blows away
    - (B) and his way shall perish
    - (C) or in the next verse from Psalm 37(:36): "Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." (AV)
3. and, on the other hand, the godly person
  - a. may in this life be in a humble or difficult position
  - b. we could have equally well have read the beatitudes from Christ's sermon on the mount (Matthew 5) this morning

- c. Jesus describes those who are 'Blessed': poor in spirit, mourn, gentle, hungry and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted ...
- d. not, in the main, what might be viewed as desirable things, yet, their prospect is tremendous: inheriting the kingdom, the earth and heaven, satisfied, sons of God, seeing God
- e. their outlook is great
  - (A) 'whatever he does shall prosper' (Psalm 1:3)
  - (B) they are promised "And He {God} will bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your judgement as the noonday." (Psalms 37:6 NAS)
  - (C) and "For His anger is but for a moment, His favour is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning." (Psalms 30:5 NAS)

4. today we shall examine this contrast

- a. looking first at the godless person in Amos 6
  - (A) who may have easy todays
  - (B) but, unless he repents, faces hard tomorrows
- b. then looking at the godly person, the child of God
  - (A) that although today may be difficult
  - (B) can be encouraged by God's promise for the future

B. Easy Todays (for the Godless) . . . . . Amos 6:1-6

- 1. these verses pronounce woes upon the godless of Amos' day
  - a. these woes are warnings to these people
  - b. in these warnings, we find a description of the godless
- 2. to whom are these woes or warnings addressed?
  - a. "Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!" (Amos 6:1 NIV)
    - (A) to Judah in the south with its capital Zion or Jerusalem

- (B) to Israel in the north with its capital Samaria
  - (C) to the men of power and authority
  - (D) ruling in their strongholds, in their mountain fastnesses
- b. Judah pretended a true religion but people worshipped in high places, the places of pagan worship
  - c. Israel unrepentantly worshipped idols, the 2 golden calves
  - d. ungrateful, unthinking of the most pleasant prospect of the land which was given to them by God
    - (A) so, in verse 2, Amos tells them to compare their land
      - (1) to that of Calneh in the lush valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Babylonia
      - (2) then to Hamath the Great on the Orontes river in Syria to the north of Palestine
      - (3) finally to nearby Gath, the chief city of Philistia
    - (B) to none of these lands is theirs in any way inferior
    - (C) Why will they not recognize God gave them this land?
  - e. they are addressed to a complacent people, well situated, who have forgotten all that God has done for them
3. how do they receive these woes or warnings?
- a. "You put off the evil day and bring near a reign of terror." (Amos 6:3 NIV)
  - b. they consider these woes to be far in the future
  - c. they are like those of whom Peter speaks in 2 Peter 3:3-4: 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming {that is, for judgement}? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.'" (NAS)
    - (A) then goes on to remind them that God did judge the world once in the flood
    - (B) and He will be coming again to judge with fire
  - d. but the godless ignore God's tender warnings,
  - e. disbelieving and mocking divine judgement,
  - f. causing the day of calamity to speed toward themselves

4. do these warnings cause them to modify their life-styles?
  - a. they enjoy the finest furniture, verse 4: *Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches ...*
  - b. they partake of the finest food, verse 4: *And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall ...*
  - c. they have the best in entertainment, verse 5: *Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves.*
  - d. they spare themselves no luxury, verse 6: *Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils ...*
  - e. it is somewhat hidden in the English, but the terms used in these verses suggest items taken from the worship service and put to secular use: as at a recent skating championship an ice dance was done to the tune of 'Amazing Grace' — use of stringed instruments of worship, the sacrificial bowls, the (restricted) oil for anointment
  - f. 'Yet', verse 6: *'they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.'* (NAS) – in the midst of plenty, they are unconcerned about the Lord's poor and what is happening to their land (and the focus now swings to Israel to whom Amos was sent)
  
5. it is easy to have a sense of false security
  - a. to be at ease in Zion ... to trust in Mount Samaria
  - b. to say, we are 'God's Chosen People'
  - c. or, for us today, to trust
    - (A) in being part of a 'Christian nation'
    - (B) in being born into a Christian family
    - (C) in having walked an aisle when an invitation was given
    - (D) in having been baptized
    - (E) in being members of the church
  - d. and failing to have a right relationship with God
  - e. for those who this describes, there are

- C. Hard Tomorrows (for the Godless) . . . . . Amos 6:7–14
1. these people may have been at ease in Zion, but, as we have already noted, the godless cannot know real, lasting rest;
    - a. Isaiah 57:20 NAS: *But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.*
    - b. God, through Moses, warned His people if they forsook Him, *“And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.”* (Deuteronomy 28:65 NAS)
  2. What marked these people as godless?
    - a. verse 8: *The Sovereign Lord has sworn by himself — the Lord God Almighty declares: ‘I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; ...’* (NIV)
      - (A) first to be noted is their arrogance and pride, which was demonstrated by the next item ...
      - (B) second, their confidence in their own position: both Samaria and Zion were in the mountains; their thought was, ‘we cannot be touched, no enemy can get to us’
    - b. from this self-centeredness there came, verse 12, a spiritual dullness: *“Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plough there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness—”* (NIV)
      - (A) Amos, the farmer, illustrates his point with something they will understand just as well as he
        - (1) in many places you will see piles of field stones at the sides of a field, sometimes made into walls
        - (2) because these have to be removed before you can pasture horses or plow in order to sow
        - (3) surely they can understand that lack of care will result in damage to their best interests!
      - (B) will they not then recognize that if they neglect justice and practical righteousness to the people of the land
        - (1) it will be a poison that kills the nation?
        - (2) its crop will be a bitter fruit, unpalatable to all?
    - c. verse 13: *you who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debar and say, ‘Did we not take Karnaim by our own*

strength?' (NIV)

- (A) Lo-Debar is literally 'a word or matter of nothing'
- (B) Karnaim means 'two horns,' symbolic of two powers
- (C) a godless people taking self-credit for shallow victories

3. God will remove this people from all the things they relish

- a. from their pleasures, verse 7: ... **your feasting and lounging will end.** (NIV)
- b. from their palaces, verse 8: **'I will deliver up the city and everything in it.'** (NIV): its citadels, fortresses, people
- c. Amos words spoken in last 10–12 years of Jeroboam II's reign; followed by 6-month reign of his son Zechariah, 1-month reign of Shallum, then Menahem for 10 years and in Menachem's reign, those same rich people in Samaria (it was only about 15 years later) had to divvy up funds to bribe Pul, king of Assyria to go away and leave them alone – God's judgement did not tarry long, and ...

4. God's punishment, though it may tarry, will be complete

- a. in verses 9–10, we read about those burning the dead
  - (A) these feared to pronounce the name of the Lord lest His attention be drawn to them
  - (B) they were burning rather than burying in that there are so many it was impossible to bury them; this is what happened in times of war as we discover when we read the record of the death of king Saul
- b. and verse 14: **For the Lord God Almighty declares, 'I will stir up a nation against you, O house of Israel, that will oppress you all the way from Lebo Hamath to the valley of the Arabah.'** (NIV)
  - (A) that is from one end of the country to the other
  - (B) the Hard Tomorrows that are coming against the godless will be complete

D. Sometimes Hard Today's (for the godly, God's children)

- 1. We have mentioned that in connection with the beatitudes spoken by Jesus Christ in Matthew 5
  - a. we live in a land of comparative peacefulness to Christians

- b. even though we see legislation that is contrary to God
- c. yet we still have peace and freedom of worship – although we should voice support the reopening of the matter of the legal definition of marriage for as it now stands there is a great risk of the curtailment of our religious freedom
- d. but the freedom in countries such as ours is the exception and not the rule: persecution of Christianity predominates the world; organizations such as ‘Voice of the Martyrs’ and ‘Christian Freedom International’ can provide facts on this
- e. but does this mean we should be discouraged ... that our Christian faith is invalid? ... far from it for this proves

2. the truth of Christ’s words

- a. in John 15:19-20: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” (NAS)
- b. and for further encouragement, Jesus says in John 16:33: ‘These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.’ (NAS)
- c. and in the midst of Jesus’ cautions to his disciples comes a word of triumph, of victory, which the apostle writes to us in 1 John 4:4, “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” (NAS)

3. and that fact, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, the residence of Jesus Christ in us, the abiding Presence of God the Father upon us gives us assurance that whatever our lot today

E. There are Always Glad Tomorrows (for God’s children)

- 1. some of you may like to read detective stories as I do
  - a. there is the fascination of the plot as it unfolds



- b. and one by one different characters are under suspicion
  - c. you try to match wits with the detective and the author
  - d. but every so often, you do not have the patience to wait until you have finished reading and you turn to the end of the book to find out
2. or maybe it is a romantic love story, and you want to make sure that it all ends happily before you read the rest; so, to the end of the book you go!
  3. well, as somebody has put it, 'I've read the end of The Book, and God wins!' God's people come out the winners!
    - a. Jesus promised in Matthew 11:28: 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' (NAS)
    - b. Hebrews 4:9 assures us in the embattled and troubled world, Jesus' promise can be trusted: 'There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.' (NAS)
    - c. and Paul declares, in Romans 8:18: 'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.' (NAS)
    - d. and further assures us in 1 Corinthians 2:9: ...it is written, 'things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.' (NAS)
    - e. what tremendous encouragement to the believer!

## F. Conclusion

1. So the church of Christ today
  - a. completely the opposite of those addressed in Amos 6
  - b. may be facing Hard Today's
  - c. but, these are bearable for the child of God
  - d. Martin Luther said: **A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.**
  - e. for we can look forward to Glad Tomorrows

2. let us pray then that we may so walk as God's children, by faith and not by sight, to remain faithful whatever may come, knowing and trusting that God will do as He has promised

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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

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