

WE MUST CARE ABOUT COMPASSION
19TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

AMOS 6:1-7
SEPT 26, '16

- ¹ "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,
and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria,
the notable men of the first of the nations,
to whom the house of Israel comes!
- ² Pass over to Calneh, and see, and from there go to Hamath the great;
then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory,
- ³ O you who put far away the day of disaster and bring near the seat of violence?
- ⁴ "Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory
and stretch themselves out on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,
⁵ who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp
and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,
⁶ who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!
- ⁷ Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile,
and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass away."

I expect most people pay attention to the news
whether they get it by TV, radio, newspaper or internet,
not just local news and weather, but national & international.
Why do we care about what is happening in other places?
Because we are connected. Wars, politics, business, etc.
on other side of world has an effect on our economy,
our security, our jobs, places we will go.
But then there is sports and even celebrity news.
Why do people care about these things which make
absolutely no difference in real life, have no effect
on our income, health, security or anything else?
It is because even though they are not relatives,
people feel some connection to them,
they may feel in some way a team is their team
they may have interest in character celebrity portrays.
Amos is saying we should care about other people.
One reason we should care is because God cares.
So Amos, who prophesied during time of divided kingdom,
went from Judah, in south, where he was from, to Israel,
northern kingdom, because he cared about them,
to warn them that because they didn't care about others
they were headed toward disaster.

His message is not just for those of another country
but for us in this far away time.

WOE TO THOSE UNCARING AND INCONSIDERATE
WOE TO THOSE COMPLACENT AND OVER CONFIDENT
GOOD FOR THOSE CHRIST GIVES HIS COMPASSION

WOE TO THOSE UNCARING AND INCONSIDERATE

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You remember the story of Joseph, who didn't get along
with older brothers who all had a different mother than him,
was treated as favorite by their father, tattled on them.
Then ended up throwing him into a pit & left him there
while they sat and ate, until they sold him as a slave.

They later regretted how they treated him.

But he did survive and they were reunited & their descendants
were now together in kingdom of Israel.

But people were still acting the same way,
not caring about others who were weaker & suffering
and even carelessly abusing them.

Archaeologists have found relative size of houses in that time
showed growing gap between rich & poor.

As Amos describes, the rich had nice beds, leisure time,
plenty of meat and health products.

while poor were overworked, malnourished, bad health.

But as long as things are fine for well off, they don't care.

Why do we care what Amos says to them? It is mirror for us.

Despite hyperbole of political campaigns, our country
and economy as a whole is doing very well these days
even though some are suffering & disadvantaged.

Researchers, like prophets of today, tell us

we tend to spend too much time sprawled on couches,
we eat too much, drink too much, spend too much time
on new fangled instruments of entertainment
for our own good

Lifestyles we are used to are costly not just for us but others.
Amount of food we consume raises price for others in world
and demand for products leads to deforestation.
Amount of energy we consume leads to pollution.
Our desire for lots of stuff at lowest possible price
means others work for low wages in bad conditions.
People moving to new houses in nice neighborhoods
leaves others areas concentrated with low income.
which results in crime and poor schools.
Our desire and willingness to pay for everything possible
in medical care drives up cost of health care for the poor.
Last Sunday's O.T. lesson was also from Amos,
accusing people of trying to cheat the disadvantaged.
Today's reading is saying even if we don't do it on purpose,
the problem is that we are careless & inconsiderate
like people speeding along in car through rain,
with windows up and music blaring,
not looking in mirror at who we may spatter with mud.
So, suppose we do care and do what we can. Does that mean
we can close book on Amos and feel fine? not necessarily,
because just as everything we do effects others,
everything else around us is going to effect us.

WOE TO THOSE COMPLACENT AND OVER CONFIDENT

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Are you better than these kingdoms?
Or is their territory greater than your territory,
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and bring near the seat of violence?"

"Woe" means "poor you." Amos says this to those not poor at all
because he has seen what has happened before.
Have you heard of Calneh and Hamath? That is the point.
Those great & powerful cities disappeared.
If you paid attention to recent Olympics, did you catch
that people in Brazil speak Portugese
while rest of South America speaks Spanish?

That is because in 1494, 2 years after Columbus' 1st trip,
before much was known about new discovered lands
they were divided between two great international powers
with mediation of third great power.

Those 3 great powers were Spain, Portugal & Roman Pope.
How do they rank as world powers today?

They went same way as Egyptian, Greek & Roman empires.
Amos says to Israel, don't think this can never happen to you,
that you can keep using your power however you want.
Israel was destroyed by Assyria (another long gone power)
not just because they were corrupt
but because their inner weakness and vulnerability
was also caused by overconfidence.

Those who were leading men felt secure on mountain heights
because they were the first of the nations, favored by God
who gave them this special place
but Amos ironically says these leaders led the way into exile.
You take see this as a warning about American exceptionalism
but it is also a caution to the church itself.

We are indeed God's special people.

But despite God's love and our attempts to do what is right,
we should not think we are so different & separate
from society around us that it will have no influence.

Our freedoms could be among the first to be lost.

At recent Synodical convention, when we approved fellowship
with a small Lutheran church body in Norway,
It's leader spoke briefly and commented that their church
exists in the darkness where we are going
and we may need to learn from their experience.

Last week at Circuit Pastor's meeting, Pastor Volbrecht
led worship, preaching about Jesus words to disciples
about temple in Jerusalem which would be thrown down.

Not long after, temple was destroyed by Caesar's legions.

He pointed out it would be foolish to think

Caesar's legions could never do such a thing again.

It was a reminder the church is not a building
but a house of living stones.

So don't take for granted church will always have buildings.
but question is not if life will be difficult for God's people
but whether we are ready to keep being the church.

No kingdom will last forever but the kingdom of heaven.

When we think of this as our rightful place
and do not think of ourselves as aliens and migrants,
we forget that our permanent place is heaven.
We should not feel complacent or overconfident
but we do not need to fear exile
because church is already in exile, away from homeland.
This is because it is...

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⁷ Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile,
and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass
away."

Everything, including heaven & earth will pass away.
But God's word will not pass away & nothing will separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
Jesus does grieve over the ruin of Joseph & Jerusalem & us
and because he cares he does something about it.
He doesn't just pay attention to the weak and poor
from his position on the mountain heights,
Even though he was accused of being glutton & drunk
he came to be with both those
who think they are secure and those who suffer.
he came down to become one of us, weak and poor
and hungry and homeless.
Because despite outward appearances, we are weak & poor.
We care about needy because we are part of them.
Even when we are feeding our faces we still have
an emptiness and hunger inside that leaves us weak.
Even when we lie on fancy beds, we lie awake with worries
about things we cannot do anything about.
Underneath our lotions & cosmetics we are full of sores,
we have inner pains and unhealed hurts
Underneath our fancy clothes are the filthy rags
of our inadequate righteousness.
But Jesus has already given us all we need
to escape the place of torment.
In his word he has given us all we need to believe,
including the good news of his own rising from the dead.
Because rather than stretching himself out on a couch to relax
he stretched himself out on the cross to redeem us
by paying for all of our failures.

And now he is risen again, the firstborn of the dead.
Now, rather than just inventing a new instrument for music,
he sings to us a new song of God's love
He anoints us with his baptism which washes away
the ugly filth of our sin
and continues to work inner healing.
He feeds us with the banquet of the body and blood
of the lamb of God who takes away our sins.
Because of this we can finally relax in relying on him,
not with complacency but with confidence in him alone.
Knowing his compassion for us is what gives us
compassion for others and opens our eyes to
the Joseph's and Lazarus's around us.

Amos warns,
WOE TO THOSE UNCARING AND INCONSIDERATE
because they are ruining things not just for others
but ultimately for themselves.
WOE TO THOSE COMPLACENT AND OVER CONFIDENT
even if we think problems in world are not our fault
we must still be prepared to live with them in this world
so GOOD FOR THOSE CHRIST GIVES HIS COMPASSION
because he does grieve over our ruin & give us salvation
and not only provide all we enjoy in this world
but lead us out of exile to eternal rest in heaven.