

A Just Man
July 13, 2008
Amos 1:1-2, 7:10-17
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Synopsis:

In this introduction to Amos, we learn that Amos is a layperson who is overwhelmed by the justice and righteousness of Yahweh. He is so overwhelmed that he leaves all else to preach Yahweh's justice to power. Jesus preaches the justice and righteousness of Yahweh when he proclaims, "The Kingdom of God is near" (Mark 1:15).

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Last week, Emily finished up the life of Joseph with the reconciliation of his family. The year was around 1800 B.C. Now we move to the book of Amos, again in the Old Testament. **(p. 1041, and p. 1048 in our pew Bible)** Don't feel badly if you have not heard of the book of Amos, you are not the only one. In much of church history, until very recently, little or no attention has been paid to it. When the older generations hear the name "Amos", they immediately think of "Andy"- one of the first sitcoms on TV

I know that this is one of Pastor Jeff's favorite books in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, he wrote the introduction to Amos that has recently been published. Another fact about Jeff and his love for the book of Amos;

when I took that last class of Hebrew language, with Jeff as my professor, it was this book of Amos that we studied and examined.

Let us Pray:

The title of this sermon, was “A Just Man.” However I have added, “and called by God.” I can relate to Amos because it seems as though he was quite content with his life style. Yet, God called him and he answered with obedience. I, too, was living a contented life when, just 8 years ago, God called me into formal ministry- but, more about that later.

Let’s learn about this Just man named Amos.

He probably lived between 800- 743 B.C. His contemporaries were Jonah, Joel, and Hosea. He was the first prophet, and his writing was the first prophetic book.

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Uzziah was the king of Judah, the southern kingdom, and Jeroboam was the king of Israel, the northern kingdom. This was a period of unusual prosperity for both Judah and Israel.

Amos was from the city of Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah.

He was a "herdsman and dresser of sycamore figs." To put it simply, he was a sheep rancher and a farmer who received a direct call from God to go prophesy to the northern kingdom of Israel.

What does Amos do when God calls him?

All we know is that he goes to Bethel, which was functioning as the capitol of Israel. The king, Jeroboam II, lived there.

Bethel had special significance in Israel's history. You may remember in Genesis 28 Bethel was the city that Jacob, father of Joseph, had his dream about the angels descending on the ladder and his wrestling with God, 1000 years before Amos.

By the time Amos was alive, Bethel was the center for idol worship in the Northern Kingdom. Jeroboam set up golden calves in Bethel and other cities for the Israelites to

worship. He did not want the people worshipping God in Jerusalem and reuniting the kingdom.

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The message of Amos marks a distinct turning point in Israel's history. Until Amos, the Israelites were familiar with the 23rd Psalm. They thought of God as a shepherd, who was supposed to take care of them, to provide their needs and protect them from their enemies. But **the theme of this book is right here in chapter 1:2, "The Lord roars from Zion"**; An angry God who will bring judgment upon his people. Amos used a very vivid word picture to that society. Instead of a gentle shepherd, God is now like a Lion to Israel. The lion was probably the most feared animal of that time. It could attack and devour a flock of sheep while the shepherd watched helplessly.

Why was God so angry?

- **Religion** was flourishing. There was a great deal of activity and outward show. Crowds would gather around the shrines during the great festivals. Ritual

was elaborate, but the people did not obey God's laws. Yahweh was patronized and compromised.

- **There was inequality between the rich and the poor.** Members of the upper class had very fancy houses, women spent their days listening to music, eating the most luxurious food, drinking wine, and taking beauty treatments. The men took bribes. They were dishonest in business whenever they could get away with it.
- Amid their prosperity, the Israelites were selling the poor into **slavery** because of debts owed. They were openly promiscuous. **Does this sound like our society today?**

This week, on Good Morning America, **channel 7** reported on the selling of children into slavery. **The segment of the show was called, “How to buy a child in 10 hours.”** After seeing this program I went to the computer to look up some statistics on slavery in our world today. An estimated 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year; approximately 50 % of all

victims are children; 126 million children work in the worst forms of child labor. There are an estimated 300,000 child soldiers involved in over 30 areas of conflict worldwide, some younger than 10 years old. These statistics are appalling!

If Amos was here today, he would be using the same words, **“The Lord roars from Zion.”**

So, as Amos prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel, about social injustices and religious ritual, this prophetic book is very relevant to us today. **I want to focus on who Amos was and what his qualifications were to deliver such a heavy message of judgment to the kingdom of Israel. And what does this mean to us today.**

Turn to Chapter 7:10-17 (p.1048) Amaziah, a priest in Bethel rebukes Amos. He doesn't want to hear anymore of Amos' prophesy. It is obvious that Amaziah serves as the priest in Bethel at the pleasure of the king. **In V. 13,** he calls the temple of God, “the king's sanctuary, and . . . a temple of the kingdom.”

Not only does Amos leave his home town, and moves north, he is then rebuked and kicked out by the religious people. But, knowing he was called by God, he didn't quit, he persevered. He continued to give out a tough message of Judgment.

V. 14, Amos claims to be a lay person. He states that he is not a prophet, nor a son of a prophet.

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So, **what is a prophet**, that Amos says he is not? It is a person who speaks by divine inspiration or as the interpreter through whom the will of God is expressed. In the case of Amos, his call came from visions from God. He lacked professional status. He heard the call of God and responded in obedience. He was what I term, a prophet with a capital P.

I want to challenge you today, with the idea that if we are believers in Jesus Christ and He is our Lord and Savior, we are all prophets called by God. We may not be a prophet with a capital P, and leave writings behind, but we all are called to speak by divine

inspiration and interpret God's will in this world. We are called to speak out the truth of God.

In the New Testament, in the 2nd letter to the Corinthians 5:18- if we belong to God, if he is our Lord and Savior, we are reconciled to him, and he has given us the **ministry of reconciliation**. It goes on in V. 20, We are therefore **Christ's ambassadors**. All believers are Christ's ambassadors with the ministry of reconciliation. That is our calling from God. **Because of Jesus' death and resurrection we do not have the message of judgment, but, by the Grace of God our message is reconciliation.**

As I studied for this sermon, I couldn't help but to reflect upon my call into formal ministry. As many of you know, I was a former Physical Education high school teacher and coach. Then a stay at home mom. I had always been in ministry of some kind on a voluntary level . . . But, 8 years ago, I was on staff at a church as the Director of Lay Ministry. I came home one day from work, and my dear husband said, "Don't come down stairs until you have

filled out the 2 essay questions and sign the application for seminary, I've done all the rest." He even had written the letters requesting my transcripts to be sent. Oh, yes, I would be able to take my first class with my daughter who was finishing up her Masters of Leadership at Fuller Seminary. Now, how could I not go! It had been over 30 years since I had taken a college course and the last paper I had written was analyzing the basketball jump shot. The first seminary paper I wrote was a 20 pager on the call of Moses. So appropriate! And one of the biggest fears I had was the fear of public speaking. **But, our faithful God, does not and did not in the case of Amos, call the equipped- he equips those he calls.**

I don't want to compare myself to any of these prophets, but I know I was called by God. It was not an easy journey through seminary and there were lots of difficulties and events that could have caused me to stop. Amos certainly had very difficult times, but he stuck with it, and so did I.

Amos' testimony to his call reminds us that all persons are potential instruments of God's work in the world, and the call to participate in that work can and does come in unexpected times and circumstances. Stories of Moses, Gideon, Saul, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, **Jesus' disciples, and Paul** testify to God's willingness to work through persons who might in the eyes of other people have been considered unlikely or unqualified.

My challenge to you this day is to ask yourself, **“What are you being called to do today in your present circumstances to be a prophet with the message of reconciliation? Note; I didn't say, “Are you being called?”, but “What are you being called to do?” Are you answering God's call?**

i.e. I was thinking over this congregation, with many gifts and life stories. And **Clark and Edale Terrill** came into my mind. Every week they sit up here in the front, coming in with their walkers. I know God has used them in a mighty way as prophets, in the past. They were elders, deacons, and Sunday School teachers. speaking by divine interpretation, for many years. But God is still calling them

and using them, in their faithfulness to him, as they sit here and pray and encourage the present leaders of this church. Often times when the pastors get together we comment on the love and prayer support we feel from these 2 people.

I have one more challenge for you today. What injustice do you need to speak out on? Maybe it is your stand on the definition of marriage- something that has been in our faces these past months. Are you called to write a letter about your Christian view of abortion and when you think life begins? What about taking some action on the horrific rise of child pornography? Are you outraged when the “powers to be” take off the words, “in God we trust” on our money, or “under God” from our Pledge of Allegiance?

Our country is in a very similar position to the societies that Amos was prophesying about. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, through the power of the Holy Spirit, as we respond to God’s call in our

**lives, we must turn to prayer. In 2 Chronicles 7:14,
The Lord said to Solomon and to us, “if my people,
who are called by my name, will humble themselves
and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked
ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive
their sin and will heal their land. How are you
answering God’s call?**