

Amos
"The Shepherd of Tekoa"
Amos 1:1

Open up in your Bibles to the prophet Amos, Verse one. I will warn you, we're only reading one verse. this is a classic preacher's move. You want to give us a little bit of a starter pack for the Prophet Amos? And so that's what we'll be doing tonight. We are going to look at this verse, but we're going to use it as an introduction for the whole series so that we can just get a couple of those key tools, those key points that we need to help us as we step into this text that is now around 2900 years old for us. So we shouldn't be surprised that we might need a couple of extra tools to help us understand what's going on. We are going to spend about 11 weeks in Amos. So we've got nine chapters in 11 weeks. So this will be a little intro and we'll give us a little bit of leeway as we get through the series to, maybe explore a couple of aspects of Amos that need a little bit more attention than just what we're able to give in a particular week.

So this is Amos chapter one, verse one. This is a typical superscript if you wonder what these are called. These are kind of like titles. If you notice we see these in the Psalms. We see these in the prophets. And this would be a superscript okay. In this, if you were receiving this in the ancient world, you'd be getting a scroll and it would have all 12 minor prophets in it. And after you had just read Joel, you would have a superscript that says, now we're going to start something new. And this is what it would say.

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds in Toccoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Isaiah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. Two years before the earthquake.

This is the word of the Lord.

Let us pray.

Heavenly father, as we come to you, we do ask that you would give us wisdom and insight as we read these things. This is a, an unfamiliar genre to us in many ways. It's not like the things we typically read every day. And so I pray that you would give us a clarity not just of mind, but of hearts, that we would hear these words. And as we do, we would be reminded, Lord, that all Scripture, all of the prophets, all of the law, the prophets and the Psalms find their ultimate yes. And our men in Jesus Christ, they find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He does not cancel them out, but he is the terminus point to which they all point. Let us, Lord, I pray, understand and hear as those who hear the words of the Shepherd, in Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

We're going to skip over to Hebrews one real quickly, though Hebrews one has a very provocative passage that the author of Hebrews, the anonymous author of Hebrews, uses to sort of set the stage of what he hopes to do over the course of his book. Now he has a very clear agenda. If you haven't read the letter to the Hebrews yet, it's pretty clear as you're reading it what his agenda is. You could title the book to the Hebrews and oftentimes sermon series or title this. You could title that letter. Jesus is better, right? Jesus is better. Look what he says. He says you like Moses. You think Moses is the best prophet. Jesus is better. How about angels? You think they're powerful. You inspire by angels. Jesus is better. How about, the ironic priesthood? The Levites who serve in the temple, the Sadducees, who are descendants of Zadok the priest. That's where we get their name, Zadok. You say that ten times fast in Latin and you end up with Sadducees. Okay. What? What is that? Okay. You like those prophets? We've got a better prophet. He's in the line of Melchizedek. But notice how he starts. Look at how he starts. This is in chapter one, verses one and two. He starts like this very abruptly. This is almost, as they say, immediate arrest. He just starts in the middle of his argument. He says,

Long ago and at many times, and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. And in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Like the Westminster Confession, which starts with okay, where are we getting all of this information? The scripture before you even get to what is the chief in the man right you in? We have to establish scripture is where we're getting these things. Notice what he says before I even dive into how Jesus is better. I just want to draw your attention to the fact that Jesus is the one to whom our Old Testament prophets remember.

This is the letter to the Hebrews. So, the authority of the prophets would have been assumed to his audience. He says Jesus is the one of whom they were all speaking, and he has now come to earth. That's the logic of Hebrews before the period of Jesus, before Jesus was here, there was a period in the Old Testament times actually going all the way back to creation, where you had these characters who were called prophets, and they actually had many titles.

They were prophets, they were called messenger, the word is *mal'akh* in Hebrew, but it's translated into Greek as Angelos. Did you know that angel just means messenger? And that title is used for prophets of the Old Testament. They're called seers, people who see things clearly. They have kind of a spiritual insight, but they're also called seers.

But it's a different kind of seers. The other title, it's like visionary seers. There are people who see visions, and that God would send these people to reveal his word right to the people of God. Yeah. Notice what the author of Hebrews is saying. He's saying the word of the Lord was

given to the prophets of old. But now we have the thing that they were reporting on this isn't to take away, by the way, from their inerrancy, from their inspiration, from their infallibility.

Oh, they were infallible. They were they were reliable messengers. And yet they were reporting on a thing reliably and their own voices and their own styles and their own concerns and conceits in the day, you know, from their historical circumstances. But they were reporting on a thing. Now, when we receive Jesus, who is prophets, right, we know that Jesus is prophet, priest and king.

He is prophet, but he's actually prophet in a different way than Amos was a prophet, because he is, as John tells us, the Logos himself. Right? He is the word himself. You have you notice in our superscript where it says here the words of Amos, okay, which he saw, it's actually the, the bar of the of Amos, the word that he was given from the Lord.

But notice what John says in the beginning was the word no, he's writing in Greek. So he says logos. Okay. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. And the word became flesh. It's very clear Jesus is the revelation of God, to which the Old Testament prophets are reporting. It's important as we begin a series on the prophets, particularly Amos, it's important for us to remember that the prophets are speaking of God, and wherever they speak of God, we must recognize, recognize that the perfect representation of God, that is the embodiment of the whole Godhead dwelling on earth, is Jesus Christ.

Sometimes here, you know, in seminary classes, people say, well, how do I how do I find Jesus in this passage of the Old Testament? What they usually mean is, how do I find substitutionary atonement in this passage of the Old Testament, what they're really talking about? Where do I find the cross? Which is a great question to ask, but anywhere in the Old Testament where they talk about God, that's where you find Jesus in the Old Testament, because Jesus is the perfect representation of God.

We must remember that. And he's not just a perfect representation of the second person of the Godhead. He's the perfect representation of the whole Godhead. He is the revelation of God. He is how logos. He is Davar, which was given to the prophets. The word.

So as we delve into Amos, we have to ask ourselves a couple of questions and we will continue to do this. Throughout this series, we'll try to say, how does this how does this text in Amos kind of put an X on the spot and say, Jesus, stand here, because that's what the Old Testament is doing. It's kind of saying, okay, we need a perfect lawgiver, Jesus, stand here.

So when Jesus comes, he says, here I am. And the New Testament authors say, and that was to fulfill what they wrote about in Amos. Right. We need perfect Israel. We need a true Israel to come out of Egypt, to go through a water ordeal, to go into the desert, but succeed in the temptation where we fail. We need a true Israel.

Jesus stand here, and then Jesus comes and stands here. And Matthew says, you see how he fulfills the anticipation that we saw in the Old Testament. So as we're reading Amos, what we want to do is we want to look for the places where the prophet is setting out an expectation about who God is, about who God's people are and what they are supposed to do to be a part of God's plan of redemption.

And we're going to just note as we go, look at how Amos is saying, Jesus, stand here. Here's the X Messiah, here's the X son of David, here's the X Adonai Lord, a covenant God. And then Jesus comes and stands and says, I have come to fulfill it all. All right. As we look at Amos, we have to notice a couple of things about Amos.

I do want to point this out just because I mentioned it earlier, and I just want to give us a little bit more information, because it is something I think a lot of Christians miss. If you were to read Amos in the Old Testament, if in the Old Testament time in the ancient world, you would not be able to find a book that just has Amos in it, you would have had to find a scroll, and that scroll would have been called the 12.

We call them the Minor Prophets. You'll hear me just slide into calling them the 12, because if you deal with ancient manuscripts much, you just start to kind of use it. It's a habit of the mind. I'm just going to be referring to this as the scroll of the 12 or the 12, and the reason why says that's what it's called in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Yeah, they were found in the 1940s. We found a scroll in there. Guess what? It had the 12 in it. Okay. And you unroll it. It's kind of like the Psalms, if you think about it. It's like finding a Psalm scroll. It's one scroll. Multiple authors. You can even make arguments about the order of the Psalms and how from Psalm 101 to 150, there's kind of a grand arc of redemptive history that's told throughout the Psalms.

And many people have made that argument. And I would argue you can do something similar in the scroll of the 12. It's one book, and you can read them all individually, and as you do, you'll get their individual accounts of what was going on in their day and age. And yet you can also read them in light of each other.

And if you do that, what you have is one big prophetic witness from the early eighth century BC to the fifth century, probably the fifth century BC. So in other words, no, no living one prophet could have had such a long ministry. Isaiah probably has the longest human ministry that we're aware of. It goes roughly from 740 BC to 581. So what is that, almost 60 years of ministry? It's a long ministry. But think about that. If we if we start with Hosea and we go all the way to Malachi, we're covering centuries of prophetic witness to what the Lord is doing through the people of Israel. So you can read the 12 as a whole. And if we read Amos, in light of where it stands in the 12, think about where it is in the story.

We start off with Hosea, who's in the Northern Kingdom. He's calling out the Northern Kingdom for being unfaithful. Member Hosea, whose wife his marriage actually becomes a sermon illustration for the unfaithfulness of Israel, his wife, who flees from him, who meets with other suitors, and who is even described as leaving food and clean clothing outside the doors of the hotel rooms where she's meeting with those with whom she's having an affair.

And all of it becomes a picture for how the Lord is ministering to the northern Kingdom, even though they reject him for other God's. And then we move what to Joel, who's in the southern kingdom, and he's talking about all of the issues that are arising in the southern kingdom. He kind of gives a grand theological picture for what the whole of the 12 Minor Prophets will be about, where he says, there's a day coming when all of the world will be judged, when the righteous remnant will repent and receive the earth, and the wicked among Israel will be burned away.

And then we switch back now to Amos. Look at already the prophet is compiling the story, and commentators debate why is it compiled this way? And it seems as if what they're showing is Northern Kingdom, Southern Kingdom back up to the Northern Kingdom again. What are they showing us? That both in the north and in the south, there was cause for the exile.

That ultimately is the main event of all of the prophets of the Bible, the exile as a prophet. As a matter of fact, your ministry is decided by where you stand in relationship to the exile. If you're Hosea, if you're Amos, if you're Jonah, if you're Micah, you're standing before the exile and you're looking forward to it. The same with Isaiah and Jeremiah in Ezekiel.

Basically, you're looking forward to a thing that's coming and you're jumping up and down like this, waving your hands as if you were standing at a washed out bridge on a foggy night trying to get the attention of drivers, drivers so they don't drive headlong into the abyss. That's what the prophets are doing when they're jumping up and down, and they're using vivid metaphors and harsh language to tell Israel, repent, turn back.

They say it right up to the edge of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Read the end of Jeremiah in 586 BC, Jeremiah is getting dragged out the back door of Jerusalem into Egypt. He doesn't even want to go. Babylon is coming through the streets of Jerusalem, tearing down the temple, tearing down the city walls, and Jeremiah is being dragged out and look what he's saying.

He's yelling out even now, if you repent, the Lord will have mercy upon you and let you dwell in this place. I think oftentimes we think about the Old Testament prophets like Amos as kind of harsh voices or unsympathetic. They don't care about their audiences. And actually argue, you know, they're screaming at the top of their lungs, like I said, at the bridge that's been washed out.

They're screaming at the top of their lungs, stop. You don't know how bad it's going to be. You think you know, but you don't know. And more often than not, interesting when they reply, when they report on what the false prophets are saying, you know what the false prophets are saying? They're saying it's not going to be that bad.

Maybe it'll just be a spiritual exile. It won't be a real physical exile. It will be a symbolic exile. Or maybe even God doesn't pay attention anyways.

So Amos is sent to the northern Kingdom, much like Jonah is sent to Assyria. He sent to a country he probably doesn't want to go to from being from Tekoa means he's from a town just south of Jerusalem, where he was a shepherd, and he, seemed to he was also he's involved in some kind of, tree cultivation as well.

It's not always clear exactly what these technical words in your ESV. I think in chapter 714, you get the language that he is a sycamore tree or sycamore fig cultivator. We're not quite sure exactly what's going on there, but he's some kind of, agrarian where he's involved in cultivating both sheep and crops. Okay, some kind of fig, maybe some kind of tree.

But he seems to be from a town that's south of Jerusalem. He's very much a Judah. Right. And yet here he's being sent to the Northern Kingdom. And I know you already know that there's quite a bit of, of conflict between the South in the North in those days. The days that he's operating is a time when that conflict was at a height.

Now, we don't know exactly the dates of his ministry, but we can kind of narrow it down. He mentions Amaziah in the southern kingdom, in Jeroboam the second, in the first kingdom, he doesn't mention their successors, which is interesting, because the successor to Amaziah is his son Jotham, who had reigned with him sort of in a regency, where the son and the father reigned together starting in southern 50 BC.

Okay, Isaiah ultimately dies somewhere between 742 and 740 BC. But notice the prophet doesn't mention I reign. I was ministering during the time of Uzziah and Jotham. Okay, notice he doesn't say that. And that's interesting because normally he would. We see that with Isaiah. We see that with Jeremiah and the other prophets. So it it means that maybe he ministered before the time that Jotham was in his regency.

So probably before 70, 50 BC. It's quite possible. Okay. We don't exactly know. His ministry could have happened just over the course of a year or a couple of years. We don't know exactly the length of it. So it's possible that it was in the seven 50s, which was a time of great wealth and riches in the northern Kingdom, in a relative difficulty going on in the southern Kingdom.

This would have heightened the cultural conflict and differences between the two regions. You notice that it also mentions an earthquake and this this earthquake. Earthquake is mentioned

elsewhere in the prophets. It's mentioned in Zechariah chapter seven for excuse me, chapter 14, verse five. It refers back to a great earthquake. Earthquake, okay, during the time of Uzziah.

And it seems as if this must be the same earthquake. It's something everyone remembers, kind of like we all if you were alive at the time. We all remember the great Indonesia earthquake of 2004. We remember that it's something we can kind of map things off of. Well, this was the year before that, so. So I can remember when the date was this was a major earthquake in the region.

Everybody was affected by it. Archeologists argue, you know, we have to say this is a little less sure, as we are talking, just at the end of the day about reading gradations and sand and rock. But archeologists argue that that earthquake probably took place between 765 and 760. If what we're looking at in the archeological record is what we're thinking of.

So that means that Amos may have reigned even earlier than the seven 50s, not reigned, operated even earlier than the seven 50s. In the seven 60s. Why am I pointing this out? Here's the thing. Remember what I said all the prophets are dealing with? They're all dealing with the threat of exile. When does the Northern Kingdom fall? Falls in 722 BC.

Okay, it's a good date just to memorize if you're interested in prophets and reading the prophets. When the northern Kingdom falls, Samaria collapses to Assyria. And 722 that would be if he's ministering in the seven 60s. That means it falls 40 years after he offers his warnings and his threats. I'll just point that out for a couple of reasons.

First of all, look at how gracious God is. The Lord is sending prophets 40 years ahead of time.

That would be as if we received a prophecy today saying, I'm just going to warn you. You know, your country, your city, your state, they're all going to fall and it's probably gonna happen sometime. And you know, 20, 65, right? That just seems forever away. Look at how much mercy he's showing them. He's saying it's not like it's right around the corner.

This is not Jeremiah. Well, we can watch the Babylonians marching across the countryside, coming to wipe us out. This is way out in the distance. Repent. You see how merciful the Lord is by sending Amos during this time? But as I pointed out, there is a bit of reluctance on the prophet. It seems we're reading between the lines here.

Why is it that he he's offering this very negative message? It's very it's a message of a lot of judgment. Okay. This is one that he's been given from the Lord. He's not from the Northern Kingdom. He's from the southern kingdom, it seems. And he has these arguments with the high priests that are recorded in his prophecies, where it seems as if you kind of you get this sort of irritation that comes out when he's talking with them.

He says things like, I'm not the I'm not a prophet. I'm not the son of a prophet. Leave me alone. I'm here because God told me to be here. It's almost like he's saying, I don't like you people any more than you like me. But I'm here because God told me to be here. That's why I'm here. As a matter of fact, it's not out of the ordinary for prophets to be reluctant about their call in the Bible.

Is it? It's a matter of fact. It's kind of hard to find a prophet where we get his call narrative, as they call it, where we get the story about how he got called and we don't get we don't get this for everybody. But sometimes they're mentioned kind of obliquely, okay. But we get Moses's call narrative and what happens and Lord says, I'm sending you, Moses, to be my deliverer.

You will be the one. I will go with you. I will empower you. You will be successful. And what is Moses say right away? Says, I got this speech impediment. Okay, you can't send me, Lord, you're actually in the Hebrew, you know, he says, I have a fat tongue. Okay? I think some of us know what that feels like.

You've ever been nervous or you're speaking publicly or something, and you're like, I feel like, have a fat tongue. Okay? Notice what the Lord says. He doesn't go, Moses. No, you don't. No you don't. Moses. What does he say? The Lord says, I know, I know you do. And that's why I'm going to give you Aaron, and he'll be your spokesperson.

Notice when Isaiah is called and that's what's happening. He knows in Isaiah six one he knows. By the way, notice this is right after the time of Amos. This is right in the year the king Uzziah dies. Isaiah is in the temple. The veil is drawn thin. He sees the heavenly host, which is where you get your call from the Lord is from his heavenly throne room.

He sees the heavenly host. He sees the seraphim, emphasizing the holiness of God. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth, our be or we are or will be filled with his glory. And notice what does he say? Here I am, Lord. Send me. No he doesn't. What does he say first? Oh, have mercy upon me, woe is me!

He sings a woe oracle about himself. I am a man of unclean lips. Does God say no? You're not. Don't. Don't be so hard on yourself. Does he say that? No he doesn't. It's a seraphim. Go get that coal. Bring it over. Let's suture his lips. Let's atone for his unclean speech. Let's give him a mouth that is able to preach the Word of God.

We could keep doing this. If you read between the lines in Jeremiah one. What does the Lord say? I know people are saying, you're young. You may think you're too young. You're not. I've been forming you from before you were born out of your mother. Okay? Even Paul, as we've been seeing in Ephesians, keeps saying, the least of the saints.

it's almost like he's saying, I don't know why I'm an apostle. I don't deserve to be here. I was born out of time, he says. I was born, I was even born at the wrong time. Was the only one who's ever persecuted the church. It seems as if the Lord said, I know, and that's why I'm sending you out to do mighty works to the Gentiles.

You see, it's almost a qualification of a biblical prophet that he is reluctant to take up the call. And it's not because of a lack of trust in the Lord necessarily. And I know we sometimes teach it that way, but I actually think it's too consistent. I think what is showing is that these are people who recognize that they are not suitable for the task.

Something we used to try to drive home with our students. If you're going into ministry because you think you've got such great ideas, everyone has to hear what you think, then you probably are not called to ministry. If you really think my job is to be the spiritual leader of people because of how great my insights are into spiritual things, you're probably not called the ministry.

It's not the kind of people the Lord typically calls, he says. I'm looking for not many noble, not many wise, not many strong. As we read this morning, why do we pick Israel? Not because they were the greatest of nations, but because they were the least the Lord loves to show, as Paul tells us. He loves to show his strength in our weakness.

So we see Amos says, I was even trained to be a prophet. I'm a sheep breeder. I'm a sycamore fig cultivator. I'm not even called to be a prophet. I'm not even trained to be a prophet. And yet I am called. And so I will go.

Well, we will see. Over the course of this study. What Amos has facing him. He's given a message that is suitable for the time that he's preaching. He is again, it seems like it's in the middle of Jeroboam, the second reign in the northern kingdom, a time of incredible stability. It's interesting, actually, when you're reading Isaiah, you're reading Jeremiah, you're reading prophets who are talking in a time of instability where you have foreign empires coming across the countryside and making Israel its vassal and forcing it to pay taxes.

This is an interesting one, because we're actually seeing a prophet who's going to a country that's in relative stability. This just happens to be a time in the middle of the eighth century where the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians and the old Hittites don't seem to be doing much. It's a time of decline amongst the empires. And when they're gone out of the picture, if you know your biblical history, then you know the next problem that is the Arameans, because they're our neighbors directly to the north.

And this is a time when Jeroboam had put down the Arameans. It's actually described in Second Kings chapter 14. He had pacified them, so they almost seem to be having a kind of fulfillment of that promise that was given to Joshua. They seem to have peace on all sides.

And that results that national stability results in an extreme material comfort for a certain class. Out of that national stability, a leisure class develops and you'll hear Amos talk about it. We'll talk about this. So for those who are at ease in Zion, woe to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria. Woe to the notable men of the first of the nations to whom the house of Israel comes.

Just be careful. I know you feel comfortable. You feel like you have all the material wealth that you need. As a matter of fact, you even long because you're so you're so lulled into a spiritual complacency. You're going to come back to that in a second, but you're so lulled into it that you've started to think that when the day of the Lord comes, it'll be a good day for you.

But Amos is going to tell them that day of the Lord, the great event of his justice, the great event of his blessing, and the great event of his coming and restoring all things to rights. He says to you in the Northern Kingdom, it will not be a day of light. It'll be a day of darkness.

It's interesting, it seems, even in that interaction between Amaziah, who is the high priest, and the high places of Bethel, and Dan, when he's talking to Amos and he says, go far away, you seer, go far away, you visionary person. Okay, go eat your bread elsewhere now. So he says that it's kind of an interesting thing. In chapter seven, verses 12 to 13, this is the high priest yelling at Amos, shut up!

Stop preaching against the high places. And he says this, O seer, okay, that's O person who sees visions flee away to the actually that in that case, the seer is the person who has spiritual insight. Go flee away to the land of Judah and eat bread there, and prophesy there and see visions. There is what that means. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the temple of the kingdom.

Why does he say this about going and eating bread? And Judah? But we do know this, that oftentimes prophets were paid by the people to whom they brought the word of the Lord. The idea was this in particular amongst pagan prophecy, that you would go and you would say, here is the word of the Lord for you. Here is my oracle to give you even about the Greek oracles.

Here's my oracle to you. And then you would pay me for having giving you the insight of the gods. We get a little insight into Amaziah here. He thinks. Have you come up here because we're so wealthy? You're trying to eat our bread. Go back down to Judah. Go eat your bread down there. That's where you're from. And what is Amos say?

This is the response. This is where he actually has occasion to say this. I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet. In other words, I'm not here to get paid by your bread. I'm here because the Lord has called me. It's interesting that even the material comfort that has lulled the nation into complacency seems to have even lulled the priests into complacency.

So there's national stability amongst his audience. There's material comfort. And then lastly, and briefly, because we will unpack this over the next ten weeks pretty in full. You're going to see about every different way that this can be worked out. But I do want to just bring it to our attention before we go. All of this comfort and stability has led to a theological complacency.

It's 3 or 3 kinds of ways that this theological complacency shows up. The first is this the wrong manner of worship? They're still worshiping the Lord. They even call on his name. But notice they're not doing it where he said to do it. He said in Deuteronomy, I will put my name in a place, and where I put my name, there my presence is and where my presence is.

That's where you worship me. But it was a practical temptation of the northern kingdoms to say, after the division between the north and the south, we'll set up our own temple complexes. Let's set up our own sanctuaries on the mountaintops, like the bale worshipers do on the mountain tops of Bethel and Dan. We're still going to worship the Lord.

We're just not going to do it in the way that he told us to worship him. And it's important that we know this, because those high places remind us that God does not just care about who we worship, he cares about how we worship and our tradition, the Presbyterian tradition. We call this the regular principle of worship. God doesn't just say, as long as you're worshiping me, it's okay.

He says, I want you to worship in the way that I call you to worship.

So there's a wrong manner of worship, but there is also a wrong object of worship. We will see that the people in the Northern Kingdom are not just worshiping in the high places, but they are doing that. They are worshiping the Lord there. But you know who they're also worshiping. They're also worshiping the other gods. There's a great temptation in the Old Testament.

Time to hedge your bets, right? If you're a farmer and you're out there in your crops every day and you worship the Lord and you're like, Lord, I know you created the heavens and the earth. I've read Genesis one, I've read Torah. I've been trained in the teachings of Moses. I know that that's true, but I just really, really need some rain.

So I'm going to continue worshiping you, O Lord. But I'm going to add to that the worship of Baal, because he's the thundercloud God. And so if I can get him, you know, maybe he's kind of a specialist, right? This is a specialty, and that's what I need. I need a specialist right now, not just a general creator.

I need someone who really handles this one particular natural phenomenon. Or maybe you say I'm on the coastline, and the worst thing that can happen is that the water can get a storm surge that comes over the banks of the, you know, of the dunes of the Mediterranean, like we

saw happen with the hurricane just a couple of weeks ago when you saw the water coming over the dunes of places like the Outer Banks.

That's the worst thing that can happen for my field to be flooded with saltwater. So I'm going to go to, the sea god and beg him to have mercy. Yes, Lord. You reign. You created the heavens and the earth, but I can. I need a specialist. The same is true. It's not a surprise why those false gods all represent different important parts of the natural phenomenon.

The bull god El and the dragon, the, the vegetation deity. Asherah, the fertility goddess. All of these are speaking to needs that we have. And we might say, well, it's so, so primitive. What primitive religion that they have. Until we remember that it's not so far away from what we do ourselves, is. Say, Lord, I love you.

I worship you. You alone are my source of peace and hope and fullness. As we talked about this morning. And if I could just get that that promotion at work, I could just find a wife. If I could just find a husband, if we could just have kids, then we'd really be secure. Then we'd really have comfort. Right?

We know that you will provide abundantly for us, Lord, but I just really would love it if my I mean, I made some really strategic investments. I hope my stocks come through.

It's easy to add to the worship of the living God. And that is, at the end of the day, the same thing that's going on with the syncretism of the Old Testament, the adding to God, other sources of security and comfort. So there's the wrong manner of worship, there's a wrong object of worship. And then lastly, there's a wrong heart for worship.

We could call this if the first one is shows up in the high places, the second one in the syncretism, the last one shows up in the hypocrisy of the people. Amos particularly points out the judicial corruption that there are judges who are making judgments that help their friends and their cronies, but don't help all of the people.

They're not based on justice, true justice, godly justice, but they're based on personal need and transaction so that you can just get a little bit on the side. There's the problem of sexual immorality. It's interesting, is and all the way back, all throughout all of humanity, one of the first ways our theological complacency shows up is in sexual immorality.

It's just a thing we do as humans. It was the same in the Northern Kingdom of pushing off of the healthy, godly, life giving model of human sexuality that the Lord gives us, sloughing it off, treating it as a light thing. The judicial corruption, the sexual immorality, and lastly, the general exploitation of the weak shows the hypocrisy of the hearts in the northern kingdom.

And it's not something that we are unfamiliar with today. We see it in history. Mid 20th century Germany, where Lutheran Church is saying the hymns of Luther. Well, trains did unknown

business outside of town, taking people into camps. No one asked any questions. They turned their eyes away. We see it in the southern church during the slavery period and the Jim Crow period, where you had theologians who were writing exquisite treatises on the atonement of Jesus Christ, and then with the same pen would write a chapter on race and anthropology that would be one of the most decrepit and wicked things you've ever read.

How does that happen?

We see it in the modern day as well, and churches that outwardly proclaim Christ and yet ignore his teachings at every step of the way.

See, Amos is going to tell us that the proper response to these things is not fatalism. It's not to say, well, what can we do? The world's going to hell in a handbasket. We just have to sit back, he told us. We're going to get judged. Okay, I guess we'll get judged. That's not the proper response. Hezekiah's response at least there will be peace in my day, not the right response, but also we shouldn't be complacent.

We shouldn't respond with that sense of just blasé. God does not pay heed. That's what the elders are saying in Jerusalem. And Ezekiel's vision of the temple. They're sitting back and they're saying, the Lord doesn't pay heed. He doesn't care. Why would he care about my little sins? The proper response is never fatalism. The proper response is never complacency.

What you will see with the prophets and men, let me tell you, they are a broken record on this. The proper response is always repentance and faith. This is not a complicated religion.

Turn away. The Lord loves to show mercy. He loves to. He loves to take his curses and flip them into blessings. He loves to annul the things that he says will happen against the people who break his law and turn away from he loves to do it. Think about how he introduces himself to Moses on Sinai, says the Lord, the Lord, merciful and compassionate, he leads with his mercy.

He leads with his compassion. But he's inviting us to repent, turn back, amend your ways. This is the language of the Old Testament prophets, and it will be the language of Amos himself. But here he stands, a southern man out of his context in a northern city, 40 years, maybe 30 years before the fulfillment of his prophecy, just begging people who he probably doesn't want to be with in the first place.

Just repent. The Lord loves to show mercy. That's Amos message for the Northern Kingdom. I would argue that's our message today. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly father, we do pray that you would bless us as we consider these things. Over the course of this semester. Open our minds and open our hearts, Lord, to a text that does feel many times very distant from us.

It's not the way that we talk. It's not the kind of poetry that we write. It's in a language that's not our own. And yet, Lord, we recognize that this text is written in the same world that we

inhabit today, and it's written to the same kind of people we see around us every day. And it is authored, inspired, and inherent by the same God that we worship today.

And so these words are for us, and we lay claim to them in Christ Jesus. Lord, it's in his name we pray. Amen.