

Amos
“The Lord Roars from Zion “
Amos 1: 1-18,2:1-5

Please turn with me, if you would, to Amos 1:1. You get to see how fast the pastor can find it in his Bible, because he didn't bookmark it before he came up front this evening.

So here we go. We are now continuing on in Amos, and this is a long reading. We're going to read all of the oracles against the nations in this one prophet, because I think they need to be handled all in one big chunk. Now, the good news is, this is poetry. So it is succinct. It's concise. That's one of the things that Hebrew poetry is known for. They like tight lines, they like tight little verses. And so this is relatively tight and concise and efficient. But we will be reading chapter one, verse one through chapter two, verse five. Now it begins with the superscript that we read last week,

1 The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds^[a] of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years^[b] before the earthquake.

2 And he said:

“The LORD roars from Zion
and utters his voice from Jerusalem;
the pastures of the shepherds mourn,
and the top of Carmel withers.”

3 Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Damascus,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,^[c]
because they have threshed Gilead
with threshing sledges of iron.

4 So I will send a fire upon the house of Hazael,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad.

5 I will break the gate-bar of Damascus,
and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven,^[d]
and him who holds the scepter from Beth-eden;
and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir,”
says the LORD.

6 Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Gaza,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they carried into exile a whole people
to deliver them up to Edom.

⁷ So I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza,
and it shall devour her strongholds.

⁸ I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod,
and him who holds the scepter from Ashkelon;
I will turn my hand against Ekron,
and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,”
says the Lord God.

⁹ Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Tyre,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they delivered up a whole people to Edom,
and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.

¹⁰ So I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre,
and it shall devour her strongholds.”

¹¹ Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Edom,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because he pursued his brother with the sword
and cast off all pity,
and his anger tore perpetually,
and he kept his wrath forever.

¹² So I will send a fire upon Teman,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Bozrah.”

¹³ Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of the Ammonites,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead,
that they might enlarge their border.

¹⁴ So I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,
and it shall devour her strongholds,
with shouting on the day of battle,
with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind;

¹⁵ and their king shall go into exile,

he and his princes^[e] together,”
says the LORD.

2 Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Moab,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,^[f]
because he burned to lime
the bones of the king of Edom.

² So I will send a fire upon Moab,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Kerioth,
and Moab shall die amid uproar,
amid shouting and the sound of the trumpet;

³ I will cut off the ruler from its midst,
and will kill all its princes^[g] with him,”
says the LORD.

⁴ Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Judah,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they have rejected the law of the LORD,
and have not kept his statutes,
but their lies have led them astray,
those after which their fathers walked.

⁵ So I will send a fire upon Judah,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, as we do, come before you, considering this text, it's a difficult text, and yet it's also one that we can relate to at times in our lives, at times in history, when we see injustice around us. Lord, it is a comfort for us to learn that you to hate injustice is a comfort. To know that you two are weighing the nations. You alone have the right to weigh the nations. I pray, Lord, that in the midst of this reading, we would not only hear the voice of our just shepherd, but that we would be pointed to Christ in His name. We pray. Amen.

Well, as you will note, this is again, a book of poetry. Amos, like all good prophets, is a poet.

As a matter of fact, in the ancient world, until relatively recent in human history, if you wanted to say something important in life, you didn't go write it out in a contract or an essay to publish in a magazine. You said it in poetry because poetry is easier to remember. And that's not

because Israelites were illiterate. And actually we have every reason to believe that they weren't illiterate.

Rather, it was expensive and hard to have writing materials around every bit. He didn't have access to handheld phones and computers, much less paper or vellum or papyrus, you know, you name it. They didn't have access to those things. And so you needed to be able to memorize things well. And so poetry, the poetry of the Bible, like in many societies where poetry is used to communicate ideas, is a poetry that's meant to be remembered easily.

There's a lot of different ways that this worked. It was it really was a kind of technology to help you remember. But one of the main things that they did, which was very important, is that they would form their poetry around two different lines. They'd have a line that says one thing and then a line that says another thing.

Sometimes you'd have more than two lines, sometimes you've had three or you'd have four lines. But the whole point of it being that each line would say something either similar or the flip side of the idea, so that you could get a deeper understanding of what the poet is trying to say. I kind of think of it like this.

It's like how the fact that having two eyes gives you a three dimensional view. Have you ever covered your eye and tried to see the world? You can still see everything, but now it's two dimensional. It's not three dimensional. You need to have it slightly different perspective from one eye to the other. That's why humans, we have our eyes in the front of our heads, right?

We can see things three dimensionally, and Hebrew poetry kind of works like that. It'll say one thing one way, and then I'll say to slightly a different way, helps you get a three dimensional view of the idea. Look at how Amos starts his poem, sets the agenda here for the rest of the book. The Lord roars from Zion.

Well, what does that mean, Amos? Hold on and utters his voice from Jerusalem. Okay, Zion is the place where the Lord comes from. Okay, just so you know that yes, Zion is often a reference to the Mount where the temple is, where Jerusalem is founded. But Zion, as you'll notice in the prophets and in the Psalms, will become kind of the place of God's deliverance.

In the restoration out of Zion will come deliverance. And it's kind of more becomes almost like an abstract space. But here, notice what he says. What do I mean by that? Here, the shepherd of Toccoa, from southern Israel, from Judah coming up to the north, he says, the Lord is roaring from Zion, and he utters his voice from Jerusalem.

In other words, the Lord, in the place where he has put his name in Jerusalem, is declaring a roar. How will we know the roar has come? The pastures of the shepherds? More an interesting

line, isn't it? A you know a field mourns King. It's in mourning that the sheep. Are they mourning? Is it the grass kind of being bent over that mourning?

Is it grieving? It gives us some more information. Just let me put it this way. The top of Carmel Withers at the top of Mount Carmel, a Northern Kingdom location which was known for kind of vibrant trees and growth, which is actually, as a matter of fact, why, the priests of Baal would go up there because they would say, look at the verdant.

Right, look at look at how rich the vegetation is on the mountain of Baal, the rain god. That's why Elijah would go up to Mount Carmel to debate the priests of Baal, because that's their mountain. They might say, oh, look at Zion. Zion hardly has any vegetation at all. But Mount Carmel has a lot of vegetation. But notice, as the Lord roars out of Zion, what happens to Mount Carmel? Does Bale stand against the Lord? No. It withers. It dries. You see how you say it? In a slightly different way. If you actually think about this and you start noticing it. Poetry throughout the Bible reads this way. Say it one way, kind of have it idea, and then you have the idea.

Be the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. What do we mean by that? The world and all who dwell within it. Okay. Why? Because he's founded upon the seas. What do you mean? He's established it upon the rivers? You see how in Psalm 24 the prophet is showing you slightly different angles on the same idea.

Sometimes there's opposites to show you. The flip side of the coin. Right. Okay. faithful are the wounds of a friend. But what profuse are the kisses of an enemy? This is what the author of Proverbs is doing there. He's making us think he's going to get your head around this, right? Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

How do you know they're a friend? Because their wounds are faithful. But what about enemies? How did it will they attack me? Will be unfaithful wounds? No, no, no. Enemies are going to profusely kiss you. He's giving you the flip side of the coin. So that you can see a thing in a three dimensional way. But you'll notice the prophet does this throughout this opening section with these oracles against the nations.

What are these oracles against the nations, these prophecies against? Notice non-Israelites, at least until the very end. Well, this this is a kind of thing, a kind of writing that we find in all of the prophets. If you notice, Isaiah has them right there in chapter 13 through 23. Is he has he has a break in his section on he's dealing with the fall of the Northern Kingdom.

And as he does that, he has a break. And then for a period of chapters he talks about other nations Egypt, Balaam, Edam. As a matter of fact, we're not sure exactly what Edam did in the Old Testament. They seem to have harassed and betrayed Israel in a special way, but for whatever reason, Edam, who we don't think a whole lot about, gets an extra special treatment of judgment in the prophets. As a matter of fact, Ezekiel, after he has his oracles against the

nations in chapter 25 to 32, he comes back to eat them later. He just has a special extra oracle against the nations, even after he's done talking about all the other, all the other nations. Notice itself has its own prophet dedicated just to its judgment. Obadiah. It's prophesying just to eat them. Whatever they have done, whatever injustice they committed, the Lord is especially directed towards them. Notice this is going to actually show up here too. It seems as if Edam was kind of the pulling the strings of some of these other nations that we talk about. But what these oracles against the nations remind us is this God's judgment, God's justice, his word is never just for the people of God.

God has created the whole world. As the psalmist reminds us, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and therefore His word goes out to the whole world. And yet as we read through these judgments, particularly these in Amos, we find that they're relatively uniform. The crimes are not always crimes committed against Israel, though they are often that crimes committed against the people of God.

However, they're also often just express cruelty, dehumanizing violence against just humans in general. And the Lord says that cannot stand, that cannot stand. So it's interesting, we should note here, as we do elsewhere, that the word of the Lord is not just for the people of God. There are some who kind of hold to that, that the word of the Lord is for the church, but it's not for outside of the church.

And I would actually say the oracles against the nations are a clear proof that that's not the case. The word of the Lord is also. Prophets were sent and called like Jonah, like Paul, to go to Gentiles and to proclaim the word to them. Well, as we go through these oracles against these nations here in Amos, we notice that there is a kind of a basic pattern that he follows.

We have the three transgressions of blank, and then the four. Whenever you have that three plus 4 or 2 plus 3 or 1 number plus a number, another number, the second number is always the one that gets used. So you'll then get four offenses that each one of these enemies has done. And notice we can just look at a couple of them at some.

Some of these were not exactly sure what they're talking about, but others we can be pretty clear. For instance, the very first oracle against Aram or Syria. You get confused by that. Some of your translations will say Aram, some will say Syria. That's because those are kind of interdependent or interchangeable names for the same place. So the argument against Aram is this Hazael the king and his son Ben Hadad, committed great crimes against Israel and Judah during the reigns of Jehu and Jehoshaphat.

These things are actually talked about in second Kings ten, verses 32 to 33, and then later in second Kings 13 with Jehovah has verses one through seven. But what happened is that they

were going into the region and they were like marauders. They're coming in out of the north northeast, coming down into Israel and taking land and abusing people.

As a matter of fact, they're described here as threshing the land of Gilead, and they're using in the description of the tools that they use in the case that maybe this is not just a metaphorical description, but that this is actually a literal description. It's why it was so terrible that they use the things that you would use to thresh seed, and they dragged it over the people who they had defeated in Gilead, some kind of great atrocity committed against these people.

So he says, Aram under has Hazael and Ben Hadad have committed great, you know, especially terrible brutality. And as a result, for that reason, the Lord will judge them. The one who holds the scepter will be brought down. The people of Syria notice their Syria being used to talk about Aram shall go into exile in Kir. In other words, like the people of God, they too will be scattered amongst the nations.

And then he moves on to Gaza. Now, Gaza is an ancient city in the south west of Israel. Okay, so note I would actually point something out when these prophets do, when they go, when they do, oracles against the nations, they often order them in clockwise or counterclockwise around the nation of Israel. Okay. It's interesting that he doesn't do that.

Amos is not interested in that. We're not sure. It's not exactly clear why the order. He may have an order of temporal things that he's thinking about, but notice he started up in Gilead, okay. Where a crime that was committed in Gilead by Aram. This is north northeast. And he drops down to southwest, almost down to Egypt, right on Gaza, which is that coastal plain.

Many of you watching the news today know where Gaza is, don't you see right there? It's a coastal flat plain. It's a very fertile area, as a matter of fact. But Gaza really becomes symbolic here, not just for the city of Gaza, but for all of Palestine. Throughout Israel's history in the ancient world, Philistia was always on the coastline, taking up some of the most fertile property and constantly warring and battling with Israel. The cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron are all Philistine cities. If you want to get a sense of what the vibe was like in between Israel and Gaza, go read the story of Samson. Samson is a man who grows up on the border between the Philistine and Israel. As a matter of fact, he even has a pagan name, Shapshu which is his name and it means a follower of the sun god. His family had named him a pagan name. And notice we see him and he kind of mingles with the Philistines, doesn't he? He's kind of not really sure. He's sort of like a person living on a border town between two countries. He's not really sure which culture he's a part of. And yet it's out of that that the Lord calls him to be a judge.

So this long hostility between Israel and Philistia in the ancient world will have a judgment brought against it. The Lord says, I will cut off the inhabitants of Ashdod and him who holds the

scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron. And all of this did take place over the course of the next two centuries in the ancient world, to the hands of Assyria and Babylon.

Notice to hear again. What did they commit? What evils did they commit? They brought, exile. A whole people probably talking about Israelites who they came in and they stole the property from and took them into exile. But what did they do? Notice this? They delivered them in verse six. They delivered them up to eat them. Who does eat them seems to be in the background of a lot of these oracles, kind of pulling the strings.

He moves on verse nine through ten to talk about we could say food. Nisha or tire. Tire was a city state that was now to the where are we now? We're on the north west, up on the coastline now in modern day Lebanon. It was a city that was known for shipping. Remember, Israelites were not big into the ocean.

Okay, remember, even Jonah wants to go down and take a ship to go to Tarshish to get as far away as possible as he can. Yes. He does not. He does not go hire an Israelite ship. What does he do? He hires, probably some kind of, you know, Etruscan ship or something like that, because he has to find somebody who wants to go out into the ocean. Israelites don't do the ocean. They'll do the Sea of Galilee much, much later. But they don't do the Mediterranean. Okay. Why? Because that's where chaos and death exists out there in the sea. However, the members of tire, the citizens of tire were known for having built enormous ships that they would take out and go around the, Mediterranean with and plant their colonies.

That's what he says of tire. Again, they delivered up a whole people to eat them, but they did not remember the covenant of brotherhood. What could this be referring to? It's an interesting passage. Know if we go back and if we're reminded of tire's relationship with Israel, we know that back in David's day and in Solomon's day, tire had a special relationship.

But actually it was almost like a brotherly relationship. The king, Hiram of Tire, even helped in the building of the Temple of the Lord. It was a close relationship between Israel and Tire, but it seems as if at some point in history, over the next centuries, they forgot that relationship. They betrayed the people of God, and they forgot the covenant that they had made with Israel.

And therefore, as with the other nations, the fire will come down upon, tire and devour her strongholds. We now get to eat them, the ones who have been standing in the background. Notice this is a pretty harsh judgment here. Again he pursued his brother with the sword. In other words, Edam, if you remember, is the descendants of Esau.

Moses is telling them the story about Jacob and Esau in the book of Genesis as they're leaving Egypt so they would understand. We have a complicated relationships, a complicated relationship with these Edomites. They're brothers, they're family. But it's complicated. Okay.

And notice what we see happening here. Etim is chasing his brother. He's pursuing Jacob Israel, as it were.

He's pursuing him with the sword and taking him into slavery. He casts off all pity and his anger tears perpetually. And he kept his wrath forever. He wasn't merciful, but he kept his wrath forever. As a result, the main cities of Edam, Timon and Bosra will be destroyed. We can continue on with each of these, but they all follow a similar model.

In verses 13 to 15 we hear from Ammon, who are due, east of Israel and Moab, who are just a little farther south down beneath them. This is, of course, Moab is the last place that Moses and the in the Israelites stop and camp before they go in to Israel. So it's a significant spot being just to the east of Judah.

But then do you notice the last kingdom to get an oracle against the nations? This is where Amos shows us that he's actually doing something. He's not just being a typical prophet and giving us oracles against the nations to remind us. Yes, the Lord will judge your enemies, Israel. So you're right to be angry at them. But notice what he does here.

At the end. He's talking to a Northern Kingdom audience and look at the last nation that he puts in this part of the oracles against the nations. He goes to Judah. We can even imagine, as the shepherd of Toccoa is preaching to the northern Kingdom, and they're hearing him preach. They might be going, yeah, that's right, that's right.

Amos, let's get the Gaza, the Gazans, let's get the Edomites. Let's get the Moabites. They deserve it. Glad the lion is roaring out of Judah. Then he get to Judah itself. They go, look, Judah itself is being judged. Finally, we're being vindicated in separating from them. We're finally being vindicated. Maybe it was our high places that kept us righteous and faithful.

And that's the reason why the Lord is going after Judah itself. And bringing judgment. Because they ignored the laws of the Lord. They ignored the teachings of the covenant. Amos here, some hundred or so years before it even happens, prophesies that yes, indeed Judah will go into exile. She will be devoured. The strongholds of Jerusalem. Remember, the lion is roaring out of Jerusalem.

But he recognizes that Judah itself will be subject to the judgment of the Lord.

Now, I can't keep you from reading the next section, but you know where Amos is going with this. He is coaxing, kind of like Nathan, coaxing David to recognize his own sin by telling him a story about a man who owns a lamb and he and that lamb is stolen because of a rich man who's careless and flagrant with other people's property is David stands up and says, kill, not kill the man.

But that man must be judged. He must pay fourfold for what he's done. And remember what Nathan says. You're the man, David. He lures him in to judging himself and finally seeing himself clearly. Amos seems to be doing a saint. The same thing as he's going through these oracles against the nations. He's coaxing Israel in Israel with cheer along with each one of these oracles.

That's right. They did do something wrong. Even Judah did something wrong. Finally, the Lord is seeing and notice what he saves the last oracle for. The last oracle that begins in chapter two, verse six. Thus says the Lord for three transgression questions of Israel, and for I will not revoke the punishment. The rest of this book is the oracle against Israel. The rest of this book is the Lord's saying, this is why my prophet has been sent to you. Israel, you hope for the day of the Lord, but don't hope for the day of the Lord, because it will not be a day of light for you. It will be a day of darkness.

So what do we do with this? What do we do with these oracles against the nations? That's what I want to focus on this evening. I want to focus the rest of our time here. Just how do we how do we absorb this? As Christians living in this day and age, how are we supposed to understand what's going on here?

These are talking about nations like Moab and Ammon. I don't even know what to do with this. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to handle it. Well, let me put forward two things that the oracles against the nations do. And they're accomplishing this both in the ancient world to their ancient audience, and they're accomplishing it for us as well.

First of all, they're doing this. They are revealing the justice of the Lord. They are revealing divine justice around the whole earth. If you have any question as to whether or not God cares about what happens outside of his covenant people, the oracles against the nations puts that to rest. You can be assured that the Lord cares what's happening, even to the nations that are not the people of God.

So God's Word for the nations shows us that he has a heart to see justice. And his character revealed not only among his people, but throughout the whole world. This is a fulfillment of how the whole story of the Bible begins. We were Adam and Eve called to do, to fill the whole earth and subdue it, right? To go out the whole world.

God always had a plan for the whole world, and he still does. And yet his just character. Is not changed as the gospel goes around the face of the earth, his just character still exists so that we can be assured that God is just and the nations will be judged. Now we know because of passages like Matthew 28 what that justice looks like.

Ultimately, even if Gaza experienced some judgment back in the eighth of the seventh century, we know that there's still a final judgment. What about those evil doers who go to bed, you know, in one night and they die in their sleep and they never see judgment in his life? There's a

final judgment that awaits all of us, and we see it worked out in Matthew 28, where all of the nations, all of the people who ever lived or gathered before, whose throne, the throne of Jesus Christ.

You see, the oracles against the nations remind us that God is just and the whole world is under his justice. We also find this theology and other passages of Scripture like Psalm two, Psalm two where it says, the nations rage, the nations are raging against the Lord. And yet what does he do? He sits back and he laughs.

He holds them in derision, even though they rage against his justice, he knows that they have no power over him, but rather they are subject to his just character. And he says there's only one way nations, raging nations. There's only one way for you not to be devoured by my good and perfect justice. And what does he say in Psalm two?

Kiss the sun, kissed the sun, kissed the king. He's elsewhere called the king. And then later he's called the sun. Kissed the king. Kiss my king. The one I've put on this earth. If you kiss the king, then you can have mercy. But if you do not kiss the king, you will be subject to the judgment of God, your creator.

So the oracles against the nations remind us that God is expressing and applying his justice today. And in the end of time, in the final judgment to the nations around us. But it also reminds us this it has a word for the people of God. It is not just revealing justice to the nations to whom they're written. But notice these proclamations.

These oracles are being spoken in Israel. You see, God's justice is not just being revealed to the nations, it's being revealed to the people of God. And what is it doing? It's reminding them to proclaim the truth, to model themselves on the law of God because it saves them. Right? But the God has shown them the way that they ought to live, a manner worthy of your calling.

As we saw this morning. Right? We are to model ourselves on the teaching of Scripture, and we ought to be places of justice, of grace, of mercy, and of healing. And be careful. Don't fall into sin. Because when the oppressed are not answered, when they're not rescued, when the weak are not taken care of, the orphan, the widow and the sojourner is the trifecta that the Old Testament uses.

But what does that. There's just people who can't do it for themselves. In other words, they can't pay you back for what you've done. So when you care for them, you're just showing your love. God says, I will come and I'll see how they're doing, and I hope you're taking care of them, because if you're not, then I will come and take care of them.

And you don't want me to take care of them.

See, Israel is seeing that the Lord cares even about the suffering of those who are not in the people of God. And so they are reminded that we should be a place that reflects God's character. Perhaps most importantly, they also remember this when they see God's justice revealed in the oracles against the nations. They remember that they have special standing before the Lord.

That's why, actually, Judah's crime and Israel's crime is worse than the crime of Moab and Ammon, because they know better. They've been given the law. They were promised by God. When he came and called Abraham out of Mesopotamia. What did he say? Those who bless you. I will bless those who curse you. I will curse you. No better you have God identifying with you.

He's made covenant with you. Israel, you have standing before the court of the Lord. How can you fall into injustice? How can you fall into dust into unbelief, and to fragmentation and sin?

You see, in these oracles, Israel is encouraged by divine justice and courage to live in a way that reflects God's character, lest they fall under the judgment of the Lord. When they do fail, what's the proper response? How Judah? How are Judah respond to this oracle? They are to respond with repentance, because the Lord loves to show mercy.

Me. That's the whole story of Jonah. Jonah takes a judgment oracle to Assyria. Assyria repents properly. Right? And what happens? The Lord shows the mercy he loves to show mercy. But Israel can also take comfort, and we can take comfort in knowing that God's just justice is not in decline. It is not being refuted or rejected or weakened, but rather it is advancing around the face of the earth.

And we can bet on it. God's justice will be done on earth. We can take hope in that. So the oracles against the nations reflect or reveal divine justice. But they secondly do this. And this is the second part of a two part sermon in case you're getting worried. Okay? They also reveal divine glory. They don't just reveal divine justice, they reveal divine glory.

You see, God does not give declarations of judgment unless he intends to draw his audience to him in repentance. And while oracles of judgment should be a comfort to the people of God if they are being oppressed, it is also a reminder to them that the Lord has a word for the people who are outside of the covenant to draw them in.

Perhaps one of the most clear expressions of this is in a passage that we don't often think about. It's in the passage of the Bible where we see the Exodus being initiated with Moses, and the Lord has come to Moses and said, I'm going to make you deliver. I know it seems crazy, right? You're a convicted murderer in the city that I'm sending you back to.

You have some kind of speech impediment. That means you're not a very good speaker. But I'm going to send you to be a deliverer of my people. And before you go, let me just warn you. The king who I'm sending to you will have a hard heart. Yes, he'll harden, hardened his heart himself. But I will also, just in case, it needs to happen.

I will also harden his heart. What a call him kind of calling would that be? I'm going to send you out to go do a political work, okay? And you're going to go do this work on behalf of my people, and I'm going to harden the hearts of the people you are sent to. By the way, Isaiah is given the same call. He's told to go to a church and he's told on the front, and as you preach, there eyes will become dull and their ears will become deaf. Okay. Go on, go preach. Okay. It's a tough calling. So why is it that the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart? Have you ever read that? This is in Exodus chapter seven, verses three through five? And I want to just read between the lines a little bit here, because it says expressly what's going on? And yet we don't find out until later exactly the effect of it. Notice what the Lord says. This is Exodus seven verses three through five. He's telling Moses that Pharaoh's heart will be hard, and therefore I will do plagues, which we would consider to be, you know, par excellence, that the clearest picture of judgment in the Old Testament is about to do the plagues against Egypt.

But we get actually a little bit of insight into why the Lord is doing the plagues. Look at what he says in chapter seven verses three through five. It says, but I will harden Pharaoh's heart. And so I multiply my signs and wonders. In the land of Egypt, those are the plagues. Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.

And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. When I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from amongst them. If you ever notice this, why is he doing the hardening of the hearts and the plagues? So Egypt will acknowledge that God is Lord, so that they will know that I am the Lord.

This is the language that he uses. Then they'll finally acknowledge that I am the Lord. We read later in Exodus chapter 12:38 that about I'm guessing we have 600,000 men, not counting the women and the children. So at least 1.2 million people coming out of Egypt. And do you notice what it says in chapter 12, verse 38? It was a mixed multitude. It was a mixed multitude. This wasn't all blue blood Israelites coming out of Egypt who was coming out, the Egyptians who acknowledge that God was Lord. You ever thought about the plagues in Egypt, the oracles of judgment against Pharaoh as a evangelistic? So the oracles against the nations reveal God's justice and they reveal God's glory. What does that mean for us? It means for us this it is a good and right thing for us to long for divine judgment. It's a good and right thing for us to long for divine justice in the world. It's good and right when we see the wicked do the wicked things that

they do, that we long to see them be answered and chastised and set to rights to receive the justice of God.

Or let me put it on the opposite it is not an evil thing for a sinner saved by grace, who has now tasted the heavenly gift of faith when they see injustice around them to desire God's justice be done. That is a beautiful part of his character, that he is a just God. And when we humbly desire justice, divine justice in the world around us, we are reflecting his just character. And just be clear, not self-interested. Revenge. Not trying to make them feel pain. Just as much as I felt pain. But when I want to see divine justice, then that is a good thing. But here, brothers and sisters, is where many of us will stumble on the gospel.

Because Christ took the sins of this world upon himself so that his righteousness might be imputed upon us. Excuse me? His righteousness might be imputed upon us, who believe and our sin be imputed upon him. Because that happened. The one who knew no sin became sin, so that the elect might be saved, because that happened. There is a new way that we now understand that God's justice can be implemented in the world.

Let me put it this way. If I take the glory of Christ, character, the wonderment of his righteousness, the beauty of his faith, and I set it over here, and then I take the horror of his death. Yes, the crucifixion, which is horrible, but much worse than that, that he received the guilt, the suffering, the justice of God.

That was that the people of God deserve that Jesus received it himself. The depths of that punishment and that suffering opens up a chasm before his guilt between his glorious character and the horror of his judgment, a chasm that is so great it swallows up every sin you could possibly commit. If you are in Christ. Do you realize that you cannot out sin what he did on the cross? You cannot commit a sin that is so great that it is not quenched on the cross. If you are united with him by faith.

See, we have to recognize that one of the things we're offering when we offer the gospel is that we are offering that God's justice is implemented in full on the head of the person to whom we're speaking, but not on his head, actually, rather on Christ's head, so that he is now redeemed and the righteousness of Christ is put on this person while his sin is put on Christ on the cross.

You see, God's justice is perfect and it is good. It's never forgotten. Don't believe that. Don't believe that in the gospel, God forgets that you sinned and somehow, like your sins, are sort of just ignored. That's not true. Your sins have to be paid for. They have to be because he's a just judge.

But when we see Christ on the cross, we see that is where our sins have gone. That's where the judgment went. It has been paid for in full, and I have received you have received the

righteousness of Christ. And that is a glorious thing. That is indeed good news. But don't forget about this. When you're offering the gospel to someone, you are telling them, yes, indeed, you deserve all of the judgment that you have earned, even by just breaking one law that we all have broke.

Many more than that. We all deserve the judgment of those who have turned away from the God of life. And yet, when you offer them the gospel, you are offering them a deal with the judge. Not only say it that way, because that's how Jesus says in his parable of the judge. The judge is offering you a deal, saying your judgment can be meted out on the head of my son, and you can receive his glorious inheritance. That's why the Apostle Paul can say this I've been crucified with Christ, the guy who held the cloaks while they stoned Stephen. He deserves to die. I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives within me.

So when you're offering someone the gospel, you're offering them indeed to come and die. Jesus said it this way. He said, if you would save your life, you must lose it. Now let me be clear. That doesn't mean that there aren't consequences for sins. It doesn't mean that there's not consequences for injustices. We see David himself and that sin that Nathan was calling him to account for.

He says, Lord, have mercy upon me. Forgive me. And the prophet says, you're forgiven. The Lord has forgiven you, but the sword will not pass away from your family. There's still a consequence for the sin that you committed, but you are forgiven. As the Church of Jesus Christ, we are about the work of declaring that gospel message so that sinners might have the just justice that they deserved placed on Christ, so that his righteousness is placed on them.

Christ has provided a way for the enemies of God, like Paul, like the men from Edgemere who come to hear Jesus speak. Like the Phoenician woman, you probably would have identified with tire, who had a faith greater than all of Israel. Like Ruth, the Moabites, God has provided a way in Christ for enemies of the gospel. Enemies of God.

Like Paul, like every person who at one time was in rebellion against God to now receive grace. And that grace that you claim for yourself. The grace that brings you to places like Brier Wood Presbyterian Church on a perfectly good, nice Sunday morning to spend your time indoors with other redeemed images of God reflecting back and glory to him. That's grace that you are enjoying. There is the same grace that he is offering to the world. And this is important for us as we share the gospel for those around us. Because no person is free from the judgment of God if they reject him or disobey him in any way. As Jesus tells us, breaking one law out of the whole of the mosaic covenant is enough to condemn you. And God does not just forgive and forget, but when we offer someone the gospel, we are offering them the opportunity to

have their judgment placed on Christ. There is no greater duty. I can imagine for a Christian in this life than to proclaim this good news to the world.

As Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:21, for our sake Jesus made himself to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. It is good to long for justice, but we must remember that we too were once objects of God's justice. The good news is that we don't have to wait until the final judgment to see that justice meted out on our own heads, because Christ has provided a way. The good news is that your judgment can be meted out on him and not on yourself. And that is good news indeed.

Brothers and sisters, let's pray.

Heavenly father, as we do come before you this evening, I pray that you would remind us of our salvation as we read in Ephesians this morning, we are one. If we are joined together in that salvation of the Triune God. Dear Lord, I pray that we would be unified not just as a gathering of worshipers, as a family in the body of Christ Lord, but as those who are proclaiming the message, and not only of God's justice, but of God's mercy and compassion to the world. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Please now rise and receive the benediction. Give you again the benediction from the Pentateuch that was given to Aaron. It's important for us to, as we consider the Old Testament, and see that there is one story of redemption that we are a part of as the people of God. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May turn his countenance upon you and give you his peace. The name of the father, and the son, and the Holy Spirit. And all God's people said, Amen.