

**Amos 7:10-17**

**Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to endure all of his words. <sup>11</sup> This is what Amos says: “Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will certainly go into exile away from its own soil.”**

**<sup>12</sup> Then Amaziah said to Amos, “You seer, get out of here! Flee to the land of Judah. You may eat food and prophesy there. <sup>13</sup> But you must never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the sanctuary of the king and the national temple.”**

**<sup>14</sup> Then Amos responded to Amaziah: I was not a prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet. Rather, I was a sheep breeder and I took care of sycamore fig trees. <sup>15</sup> But the LORD took me from tending flocks, and the LORD said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel.” <sup>16</sup> But now, hear the word of the LORD, you who are saying, “Do not prophesy against Israel” and “Do not preach against the house of Isaac.” <sup>17</sup> This is what the LORD says: “Your wife will be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be parceled out with a measuring line, and as for you, you will die upon unclean soil. And Israel will certainly go into exile far away from its own soil.”**

Dear ministers of God’s saving Light,

I’m willing to bet that most of us haven’t thought about lighthouses much lately. It seems that lighthouses have become almost obsolete. The old lighthouses are still there, but they seem to serve more as museums and tourist destinations, but they don’t seem nearly as important as years ago. In the past, lighthouses were extremely important to sailors, especially at night or when there was dense fog. The light on the lighthouse was used to help the ships navigate the coastline so they didn’t get lost or run aground. They warned sailors of the dangers that they were to encounter if they got too close to the rocks or shoreline.

It would have been an important job to be a light keeper, which were the people that manned the lighthouses -- 24/7. It took a team of people to have enough people on duty 24/7, but it must have took lots of dedication. You couldn’t say I am too tired today or I have something more important to do or whatever other excuses we could think of. You took your job seriously because lives were at stake. Your love and concern for those sailors and those boats was what led you to keep the lighthouse operating 24/7.

In much the same way, God calls all of us as his children to be “lightkeepers.” He wants us to be dedicated and loving children of God who as his “lightkeepers” warn those who are heading into spiritual ruin and destruction. Simply put: God has work for us to do! This is our ministry. Ministry is nothing more than God’s people serving other people with God’s message that is designed to keep them safe eternally. Ministry is God’s people sounding the warning about sin so that they can shine the light on Jesus’ forgiveness and love. When we understand what ministry truly is and we understand the loving purpose for which God sends his people out into the world to do ministry, we see God’s great love and grace at work in us and those to whom we minister. It is God’s love that we are going to dwell on today as we look at our own ministry though the life and ministry of the prophet Amos as God encourages all of us to:

**Sermon Theme: Keep Shining the Light!**

- 1. People are heading for spiritual destruction**
- 2. God wants all to live forever in heaven**

Israel needed the warning. They were sailing directly into rocky shores of sin and unbelief and were in danger of sinking and drowning spiritually. The problem was that they thought they were doing just fine. They were in a time of economic and political prosperity. Business was booming and they were expanding their borders militarily. But their prosperity had also increased their moral, spiritual and religious corruption that was taking place in Israel. Underneath this fake exterior of prosperity and good times was nothing but rot and decay. The list of Israel's sins was great: idolatry, self-righteousness, deceit, arrogance, greed, materialism, oppression of the poor, "going through the motions" of worship, sexual immorality, and corruption in the courts. These actions were evidence that the hearts of the people were no longer with their Lord. Their hearts were focused on themselves. Their "going through the motions" worship and their religious life only gave them the false security that they were right with the Lord when they were not.

Israel had forgotten God's past punishment for their unfaithfulness and his patience was at an end. He sent Amos to proclaim to the people that destruction was only 30-40 years away because of their sin. Amos had some very difficult things to say to the people. If you were to take the time to read the first 6 chapters, you will hear the very bold and direct language that Amos used to tell the people in no uncertain terms that they were wrong in the way they were living and were going to face judgment for it. His main message to Israel is that they were going to face defeat and be sent into exile because they would not turn from their sin nor would they heed God's message to seek him and live.

Now we might look at this today and talk about how politically incorrect it is to talk that way about other people and their lives. When talking about sin, you will hear many who claim that it is not for us to judge other people nor to point out any errors in their ways, and if our only purpose is to make ourselves look better than them or to tear them down in the eyes of others, they would be correct. But this was not the purpose for which God sent Amos to his people. Even though Amos had some tough things to say that were a very stinging rebuke for their lifestyles, it was God's love that led him to send that message to Israel through Amos. But some might argue that this doesn't sound like God is loving, **"This is what Amos says: Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will certainly go into exile away from its own soil."**

But if you look back to Chapter 5 you can see God's real purpose in sending Amos to speak these harsh words, **"Seek the Lord and live...Seek good not evil, that you may live...perhaps God will have mercy on the remnant of Israel."** Do you see God's loving purpose in sending Amos to Israel? It was not to hate them, but to draw them back to him. God sent Amos to Israel to show the deep love that he had for them. He loved them so much that he wanted them to recognize their sin, repent of it, turn from it and live forever. God was sounding the warning horn so that they would see the light which would lead them to life.

The reaction they had to God's message was not good. Our text does not give us the reaction of all the people, only that of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel. Yet his response is representative of the rest of Israel, **"Then Amaziah said to Amos, 'You seer, get out of here! Flee to the land of Judah. You may eat food and prophesy there. But you must never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the sanctuary of the king and the national temple.'"** He basically charged Amos with treason and accused him of conspiracy against the king. But Amaziah didn't wait for Jeroboam to respond. He went after Amos himself, even going so far as to imply that Amos was preaching this message for his own personal gain. Essentially, Amaziah and the rest of Israel viewed Amos to be politically incorrect and took his message with that same attitude.

But in his response, Amos lays out what ministry is all about, **"Then Amos responded to Amaziah: I was not a prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet. Rather, I was a sheep breeder and I took care of sycamore fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending flocks, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"** Basically Amos was saying that the Lord sent me to prophesy to his people. Amos wasn't in it for his own gain. If he had his way about it, he would still be tending sheep back home. He didn't make this decision on his own to preach against Israel. He wasn't finding some sadistic joy

in preaching this message of destruction. God sent his servant to be the spokesman of his message to his people. Throughout Scripture, this is what we see God doing through his servants. He sends his servants to his people. What love and grace of God. He doesn't abandon his people or leave them all alone. No! He sends his servants to his people with the purpose of bringing them God's words of love and forgiveness. And in this, we see God's love. This is ministry. God's church is not about being social or political activists. God's church is not here to rid the world of social evils. God sends his servants to serve people with the Word of God. This is what ministry is all about. It is about serving people with the message that they need to hear most. And it is his grace and love that he continues to do this for his people.

But we need to ask ourselves, who needs to hear this message the most? We Do! We need to hear the same message that Amos brought to his people. Even though we may think on the outside that we are pretty good, on the inside we are still sinners. Even though we know God and love him, when we do things that go against what God says in his Word, we are sinning. When we engage in sexual thoughts or actions outside of the marriage relationship, we are sinning. When we are just doing the "going through the motion" type of worship but show no real fruits or faith or response to God's Word in our lives, we are sinning. When we choose our wants and needs over what God commands, we are sinning. We are separating yourself from God and headed toward the rocks which will bring eternal destruction. No one likes to talk about sin, and we certainly don't like to hear about sin. We can try to hide your sins. We can pretend that they won't hurt us, but God says something much different and we need to be warned. We need God's servants whom he sends to shine the light that show us that we are in danger of being destroyed eternally in hell.

But note God's purpose in sending his servants. It is not to rule every aspect of our lives. God's servants don't preach this message to hold us down. God sends his servants to us to bring his message so that we may repent and live. This is what God wants of us. He wants us to heed the warning, recognize our sins, lay them before the Lord and see the light of God's grace and forgiveness. God wants us to recognize his grace in sending his servants with his Word. And in response, he wants us to listen to the message his servant brings. I know that it's easy to let personalities get in the way. I know that in this world, our trust in leaders and those in authority has been eroded time and time again because we are dealing with sinful people. But God wants his people to recognize the warning light that he sends through his servants and rejoice and follow it. Some people go home and grumble and complain to each other because their Pastors or Elders dared to love them enough to sound the warning about their sin and shine the light on the path to heaven. This is not the reaction that God wants from his people. He wants from us a response of joy and thanks that God loved us enough to send his messengers into our midst to help and assist us on the road to eternal life and point us to the love and grace of Jesus that brings forgiveness for our sins.

But God wants our response to go further. He also wants each one of us to go out and shine his Light for others on the path which leads to life. We so often talk about our Church and what our Church can offer people, but do we personally do ministry and talk to other people about what is necessary for salvation? Do we love people enough to be politically incorrect in pointing out that they are on the wrong path that leads to hell so that we can shine the light for them on the path that leads to life? It's not always easy. It's not always popular. It won't always make you friends in this world. But God sends us out from his Church to carry out his ministry. God sends each one of us out to sound the warning about sin and shine the light which points to heaven. In God's eyes, we are all ministers that he sends to serve his people with his Word. This is why Christians form the visible assemblies that we call churches—so that we can hear the Word, receive the sacraments, and share our faith with sinners who do not yet know him. When God's messengers faithfully preach the pure gospel and administer the sacraments for us as Christ instituted, God wants us to faithfully hear them, honor them, and confess the truth with them. God wants us all to Keep Shining the Light! Amen.