

Friday, August 4, 2017

Hate

Amos 3-5

"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 5:21-24

Israel was doing everything right. At least that is how it looked on the surface. The ceremonies and the feasts were being observed. The offerings were choice and the songs were loud. But all of that was repulsive to the LORD and He hated it. He despised the offerings and He couldn't stand the assemblies. The songs were like noise to Him. He saw that the hearts of the people were not turned to Him. Their gatherings had come to be something that met their own need to look right. But God makes it clear that He is not interested in His people looking right. He is interested in them doing right—justice and righteousness constantly flowing from the lives of His people. Micah 6:8 comes to my mind as I read these verses. God requires His people to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with Him. The prosperous people have offered worship that does not include the heart of God. He hates the attempt. I must pause here to ask myself about my worship. How do I prepare my heart to worship God—not just in my day-to-day life but especially in the gatherings that I have with other believers. Are my songs offered with a selfish heart? Am I concerned about social justice and righteousness flowing from my life and the life of the church? Or are my words just empty air?

O LORD, I long for my worship to be pleasing to You. I long for it to come from a heart that has been captured by You and sees the needs of the world in the way that You do. Continue to shape my heart of worship Lord so that You may find it pleasing in Your sight. Amen.

Saturday, August 5, 2017

Complacent

Amos 6-7

Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!

Amos 6:1

This is a woe to both Judah and Israel. Both nations have become complacent, thinking of themselves more highly than they ought. They felt they were better than other cities but God asks them to consider carefully whether or not they really were. They considered themselves to be the foremost nation. God indicates that they should not allow that thought to bring them to a place of complacency. Complacency is built on self-deception and a faulty perspective. It is not a realistic response to reality. It is a sin that draws one away from God. It is an attitude of indifference. God rejects indifference. One cannot serve two masters. One must be chosen and followed. Complacency resists the choosing of a master without realizing that the lack of choice is a choice. All too often affluence breeds complacency. All too often self-centeredness breeds complacency. All too often selfishness breeds complacency. The justice that God longs for His people to be involved in will not happen from complacent hearts. All too often comfort breeds complacency. There are many things in the world today that demonstrate complacency. As a child of God I must not allow myself to grow complacent. There is much to be done for the King.

Dear God, I admit that I have large areas of my life that are impacted by complacency. I turn my eye away from areas that need Your justice and convince myself that it is someone else who should be stepping in. Please Lord, keep me from complacency. Give me a sense of intentionality in my service to You. Amen.

July 31–August 5, 2017



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, July 31, 2017

Wise

Hosea 13-14

Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them. Hosea 14:9

Hosea closes with powerful rhetorical questions and a solid statement of parallelism. As I complete reading this book, am I able to say that I realize these things? Am I able to say that I understand them? In truth, I do not totally realize and understand. Yet, as I look back and consider what I have read in this book, I feel that I have a greater understanding of the heart of God and His longing for me to experience the freedom that comes from living in the loving response to Him for which I have been designed. I understand His deep love for the nation He has chosen and His absolute promise to restore them at a future date. It is especially clear in this last chapter. The last sentence is telling. All the ways of the LORD are right. Satan would love for people to think of God as unfair. It is the lie that he told Eve and the lie that he continues to propagate. Those who are righteous are not tripped up by this lie. They see the ways of the LORD as right and true. Yet those who are deceived (the rebellious) cannot see the love of God in His ways. All they see is what they perceive is unfair. This causes them to design gods of their own liking. I must be very careful to always keep my heart reminded that all the ways of the LORD are right. This is the lighted path for my life!

Dear God, how I love the path that you allow me to walk in. Thank You for Your ways that are always right and always true. Make me wise. Keep me discerning. Draw me close to You in every moment of my day so that I can radiate Your love. Amen.

Tuesday, August 1, 2017

Rend your heart

Joel 1:2-27

"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. Joel 2:12-14

Joel is speaking to the nation of Judah and using a plague of locusts as an illustration of a coming battle. Judgement is coming. Yet there is a call to repentance. God is always calling people to repentance. He is not willing that any should perish but only the repentant will avoid the final judgment. Joel reminds his readers that the LORD is compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. He will relent in sending calamity. I remember yet again that God's relenting is not His changing His mind. Rather it is His "consistent response according to His changeless nature to a change in conduct" (Charles Feinberg). God is not obliged to turn and have pity. I cannot expect that I can demand it. But who knows? I love that Joel presents it this way. He is not calling for repentance so that a certain outcome will be forthcoming. It is a call to repentance because God already is compassionate. The call to repentance is a call to an inward change. It is a rending of the heart. Tearing the heart as one would tear a garment. God longs for me to open my heart to Him. This means that He longs for my stubborn will to be surrendered before Him. That is what it means to rend my heart—surrender. God is calling His nation to surrender their wills to His compassion so that He can give a blessing. One day in the future as a nation they will. Will I rend my heart before the LORD today?

Dear God, I surrender all to You. All to You I freely give. You know that is the desire of my heart Lord! Yet so many times I hold on. I long for my heart to be torn open for You so that my hard heart will not keep me from Your blessing in my life and then poured through my life to others. Amen.

Wednesday, August 2, 2017

Zion

Joel 2:28-3

*"Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her." Joel 3:17
"The LORD dwells in Zion!" Joel 3:21b*

In the Hebrew Scriptures, verses 28-32 are considered to be chapter three of Joel with our chapter 3 being chapter 4. Evidently the verses were thought of as important enough to compose an entire chapter. Indeed, the events spoken of are significant enough that Peter uses them to help people understand what was happening on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter helps us understand in his sermon that "Afterward" in 2:28 actually refers to the last days. These last days began with the ministry of Christ on earth as the author of Hebrews tells us in 1:2. The last days culminate with the Day of the LORD after which the LORD God will dwell in Zion—His holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy—never to be invaded again. This is a certain hope for a future event. Joel closes his book with the excited proclamation of the King in His city realizing that it follows a time of great battle and tribulation. I must realize that I am living in the last days. God has poured out His Spirit freely on all who would repent and turn to Him. God is indeed saving all who call on His name. But there is a terrible time coming before the LORD dwells in Zion. I must be urgent about His business until He comes.

Dear God, I read this last line about You dwelling in Zion and I long for it to be so. I understand that many things must happen before that can occur, but I also realize that I am now living in the last days. Please give me the sense of urgency to live out the power of the Spirit that You have poured out on me! Amen.

Thursday, August 3, 2017

Roars

Amos 1-2

He said: "The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers." This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath." Amos 1:2-3

Amos starts loudly. The lion is roaring. God's wrath is being made known. Amos will denounce six Gentile nations, Judah and Israel. Each will be denounced with the same proclamation: "For three sins, even of four." The way my mind works, I start looking for a list of four things that God has against each of these nations. Instead, I must understand this is a Jewish idiom that really means it is an uncountable number of offenses that has finally come to an end. The offenses are too great to list—and they are growing. Amos is prophesying at a time of greatness in both Israel and Judah. Jeroboam II is king in Israel and Uzziah was reigning in Judah. It was a time of affluence and relative peace. There was great material success as war was not ravaging the land. The overall sense was that things were good. In the midst of that feeling Amos steps in to reveal that things are not good. They may look good, but there is an underlying sin in all the nations. Through Amos, God roars to make known that His wrath is about to be poured out. I wonder how God roars today? It would be naive to believe that there are not just as many things in every nation of the world today that would warrant the wrath of God. God has spoken the coming wrath to be poured out on all the earth because of the uncountable sins that have been committed against Him.

O LORD, You are indeed holy and I am certain that Your voice still roars against the sins of the nations. I read this and once again I am amazed at Your mercy to those who You have forgiven in Christ. I am so deserving of Your wrath. The tally against me is three even four. Yet Your mercy falls on me because of Jesus. I am broken before You and grateful for Your love. Amen.