

**The Weekly Word**  
January 14-20, 2019

We begin reading some of the OT prophets this week. Ancient words with present day impact. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

**Monday, January 14: Joel 1 Where do you turn in time of trouble?...**

How do you process disaster? Where do you turn in times of trouble, yes, even times of extreme trouble? I had to stop and ponder my own questions. Where do I turn when trouble strikes?

Life is asking this question of Israel. Israel has been ravaged by locusts, hordes of locusts. Fields are destroyed. Livestock is suffering. Where do you turn in times of trouble? Joel turns to the Lord.

*To you, LORD, I call, for fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness and flames have burned up all the trees of the field (19).*

Five words say it all for Joel. *To you, LORD, I call.*

I don't want to sign up for trial by disaster, but the questions still remain. Who will I, who will you turn to in a time of disaster –personal, family, national, what have you?

I would like to think I would be like Joel and turn to the Lord. I hope that a faith honed over the decades will find its anchor in God more than self or ability or ingenuity. I hope and pray this is so, but do we ever truly know until the time of testing comes?

This chapter is leaving me pensive, thoughtful, wondering.

My sense is that I would turn to Jesus, but I don't want to be arrogant or prideful about this because I know pride comes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). So I trust that my faith will be strong enough to weather any storm life throws at me. At the same time I will continue to lean into my faith in Jesus. I will read His word, pray, worship, meditate on the Word and try to serve Him faithfully believing He is with me and will never let me know.

*Lord, as I sit today, I say again, 'I put my life in Your hands, Jesus'. Lead, guide and direct. I pray this in Your name. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 15: Joel 2- Loved by God...**

The chapter ends with the lines used by Peter on Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. Because of familiarity it was tempting to pause with those verses and ponder. But before I read those words ,verses 12-14 caught my eye, so I returned to them for my meditations.

*"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 relent and leave behind a blessing— grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.*

Following immediately on the heels of the destruction by an invading army, the Lord offers a gracious hand to Israel. God invites them to return, to come home and be restored. At the heart of God's invitation to return are very familiar words, words that show up numerous places in the

Old Testament. *Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.*

Those words paint for me a compelling image for God. Who would not want to run into the arms of one who is gracious, compassionate and slow to anger? I certainly would. Honestly, how wonderful would it be to be embraced by an all-powerful, all-knowing God who is known to be gracious, compassionate and slow to anger?

I kept turning those 3 descriptors over and over in my head.

Gracious... full of grace, extending love and care when it is not returned by the other party.

Compassion... caring, heart for the hurting,

Slow to anger... I have met some people quick to anger, they are NOT pleasant to be around.

Life in their orbit is like walking on eggshells, not wanting to provoke them in the slightest way. The Lord God is the opposite of that, the kind of person you can be around and feel safe.

This is our God, this is my God. He invites me into relationship with Him creating a safe and comfortable place to be. And even when I have strayed, like Israel did, the Lord always welcomes His family back when we come to our senses and repent.

What a gift.

What a God...

*Lord, I thank and bless you because You have welcomed me back with open arms time and again. I praise You and I bless You. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen*

### **Wednesday, January 16: Joel 3- Remain faithful in good times and bad...**

Ok, honestly vengeance is not the most inspiring topic on which to mediate. Still somehow the final words of this book arrested my attention. Verse 21: *Shall I leave their innocent blood unavenged? No, I will not.* "The LORD dwells in Zion!"

That question and answer posed by the Lord is chilling when you let it sit in your thoughts for a while. *Shall I leave their innocent blood unavenged? No, I will not.*

The word is spoken about God's Old Testament people, so it is probably fair to expand it to include all of God's family now that the New Testament has come.

*Shall I leave [my children's] innocent blood unavenged? No, I will not.*

Two thoughts spring from this thought.

One, some of God's children will suffer at the hands of others. Innocent blood will be spilt. Throughout the New Testament we see that God's people face persecution, trial and pain. This will happen to some of God's people. Theologies of 'all is well for the follower of Jesus' are just false. Innocent blood will be spilt.

God will avenge His children's pain. In His day He will judge those who are against Him and His people. I don't know when this day will come, but it will. God has spoken this over and over again.

So what does this say to me today, here in 2019? First, I don't know what will come my way, but God will see that justice is executed. The Righteous Judge will hold court on a day of His choosing. Until then, I need to remain faithful. In good times and in bad I need to remain faithful!

*Lord, I pray for strength to remain faithful... faithful to you in thought, word and deed. Faithful to you in service and giving and living. Faithful in witness and in the quiet moments of my life. I pray this in the name of Jesus who was ever faithful. Amen and amen.*

### **Thursday, January 17: Amos 1- I wonder...**

The book of Amos has burrowed its way into my heart over the years. His lyrical approach, *for three sins of xxx, even for four...* setting up his condemnation of a particular country. His methodical approach speaking hard words to all of Israel's neighbors. I am gripped every time I read this book.

As I began to read today, the opening beckoned me. I found myself considering the man, Amos, rather than any of his particular words to Israel's neighbors

*The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel (1).*

Who is Amos? A shepherd. And seemingly not even a shepherd of particular renown. He is *one of the shepherds of Tekoa*. He is a working class man, indistinguishable from the working class men around him. To this everyday 'Joe' God sends a vision, a vision he understands he must speak and record for the people.

I wondered what prepared him for this task, if anything. I wondered how a Mr. Nobody summoned the courage to speak this word in a forum that caused it to be recorded and kept for posterity. I wondered if God chose me, another Mr. Nobody, to speak a word on His behalf to the nations if I would have the courage to do it.

I wondered...

*Lord, am I faithful to the calling You have set before me? Lord, am I strong enough in You to be an Amos? I pray, Lord, for all the strength I need to be the ambassador and servant You need me to be. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

### **Friday, January 18: Amos 2- Am I living up to my calling as a child of God?...**

Deftly Amos reels in Judah and Israel. Imagining Amos speaking to a crowd of Jews, I can hear them cheering each time one of their neighbors gets judged by the Lord. "They are getting what they deserve," you can hear them chanting.

Unsuspecting the noose tightens until Judah and then Israel are in God's crosshairs. Judah is judged for rejecting the law (4) and Israel for violating various aspects of the law. Neither is living up to their calling as children of God.

Typing that last phrase hits me. Am I living up to my calling as a child of God? It can be so easy to point fingers at Israel or anyone else and say this or that is what they are doing wrong, but never look in the mirror and honestly appraise one's self.

I looked back on these sins of Judah and Israel. Maybe these would provide plumb lines for me to measure my life against... forsaking God's law, God's Word, mistreating the poor, sexual sins, greed and drunkenness. I start here and then begin thinking about the 10 commandments... honoring God, honoring people. How am I doing?

I fall short... I can be selfish and self-seeking. I've been known to lie to cover my shortcomings... I am deeply imperfect. If I were alive in Amos' day, God's finger of judgment would have pointed to me! And it does even today. The only difference is that through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, I am covered by His blood. I have been saved by His death on the cross, where He took my sins and gave me His righteousness.

*Thank You, Jesus, for saving me. Thank You, Jesus, for bearing my sins and giving me Your righteousness. I surrender to You. I look to You as Lord and Savior. I believe in You and I confess with my mouth that You, Jesus,*

*are Lord and believe in my heart that You have risen from the dead. Thank You, Oh God -Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. To You, Oh God, I pray through Jesus, my Savior. Amen.*

### **Saturday, January 19: Amos 3- Reduced to humble praise...**

Terrible, terrible is the Word of the Lord. Terrible, terrible is the Word of the Lord.

Amos is sent to the Israel, the northern kingdom, with a word of doom and destruction. The time for God's judgment has come. *This is what the LORD says: "As a shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch"* (12).

What a gruesome picture. The sheep is not saved; it is torn to bits. What is 'rescued' is of no use. Only bits and pieces of a mauled animal remain.

God is forecasting destruction of Samaria. And this forecast came to be when Samaria was overrun by the Assyrians.

I tremble inside... Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead, as we say in the Apostle's creed. Judgement for those outside of Christ will be devastating... the lake of fire, eternal punishment, thrown where there will be gnashing of teeth. These are only three of the pictures given in the New Testament for the judgment of God.

The words of Amos fulfilled stand as testimony that what God has said, God will do.

I tremble again. Were it not for Jesus, my Lord, my fate would be the lake of fire, eternal punishment, thrown where there will be gnashing of teeth.

Again, I am reduced to humble praise...

*Oh God, tears well in my eyes. Your grace has saved me. I deserve nothing but wrath and yet I have received mercy and grace. I will bless You with my mouth. I will bless You with my life. I will bless You, God, my Redeemer. Through Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.*

### **Sunday, January 20, 2019, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@pcogonline.org](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.