

Pastor T.C. Arnold
2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Amos 9:11-15
January 15th, 2012

Call to mind, for a moment, what the Epiphany Season is all about. At Christmas God became man to save us. At Epiphany this God made flesh shines forth as the light of the world. At Epiphany this “fleshy” Jesus is made known to the world as God standing before them. That’s important to know because there is a reason for all of this... there is an order to it. God enters humanity... He comes onto the scene... to fulfill what has been spoken of for centuries. God comes forth and shines as the bright light of hope in a world that is broken. God is made flesh, and made known to the world as God to repair and restore humanity’s relationship with the Heavenly Father. He comes to fulfill, to raise up, to repair and to restore what was truly broken.

And what was truly broken was humanity. That’s what He came to raise up (as it says in the text), to restore and repair. As a matter of fact, that’s what the prophet Amos tried to explain to Israel some seven hundred years before Christmas Day. Time and time again Amos tells Israel that there will be judgment placed upon them by the hand of Almighty God. In Chapter three it says, “*Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob, declares the Lord the God of hosts, that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions, I will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground.*” You see, at the altars in Bethel, they were worshipping false gods. Such things God would punish. Later on a priest in Bethel starts calling for Amos to get kicked out of the country for “spouting off” against the holy city of Bethel. Amaziah appealed to King Jeroboam that Amos’ words were worth the sentence of treason because Bethel is the place where the King worships. The Lord also says in Amos chapter five, “*For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins – you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe and turn aside the needy at the gate... In the squares there shall be wailing, and in the streets they shall say Alas! Alas!*” The wrath of God on Israel was soon to come because Israel looked toward themselves and other gods. Amos was very clear.

But as we see in the text for today, God does not leave His people dead – not those who live in Christ. There would be a promise for those who remained in the Lord. It would be in the form of a God who would come to fulfill all things... to raise up, to repair and to restore what is broken. That’s where we pick up our text for today. We pick it up where God leaves us. We are left in the hands of the one who fulfills all things – the one who is to come – who came to save the world.

The first part of Amos, all the way to the end of chapter nine, is intended to burn and bury the world of power politics and phony religion as these were known in Amos’ day. This is the killing message of the law. And in our lives today we sometimes see quite vividly the killing message of the law of God. We perhaps see His judging works as troubles persist in our individual lives. We wonder if God is punishing the sins of that person we know or love because they are suffering in a particular way. It’s easy to see a God who judges—a God who condemns—a God who sends death and destruction. All we have to do is look at the suffering around us. All we have to do is see how things have gone wrong or how tragedy rears its ugly head. All we have to do is take one quick look at the world and see the affects of sin – and whether we say God allows this or God causes such things – it really matters not. The reason: because they exist in our lives regardless. The pain and sufferings are the same.

Here we are – sufferers in the present age. You know your struggles. And sometimes you wonder if God knows them. “I’m sure He does,” you might say to yourself. “But why isn’t God doing

anything about it? Why does my present suffering continue?” We hear about the righteous anger of God in the book of Amos. He is mad because the sins of the people are so great and they have turned away from Him. If God can get angry with us, like He did with Israel, is it ever permissible for us to get angry with God? We might think, “No, we don’t have that right. God is the God of giving everything that is good and we must accept all things—whether good or bad—with gladness.”

Have you ever been angry with God? I have. Sometimes I’m confused by what He does. Sometimes it makes me mad to see horrible things happen to those who seemingly do not deserve it. I have been caught shouting prayers to God that are not in a pleasant tone. Instead they begin, “God what are you doing... or... God, why don’t you just stop it?!”

Like all relationships, emotions emerge. Sometime those emotions bring joy and feelings of contentment. Sometimes those emotions bring us sadness or anger. There may be times in our life when we are angry with God. God’s shoulders are big enough to handle our anger. Just understand this... make sure our anger is the kind of righteous anger that God Himself expresses (example – Jesus in the Temple when He was angry at the moneychangers). Our anger may be the result of being confused as to why God in His alien work and will would have things such as sufferings placed upon us. Righteous anger might ask God why, it may not understand. But righteous anger never leaves God alone.

Unlike Israel did to God – and what Amos wrote about in the book that bears His name – we are never to leave God alone in anger. In other words, righteous anger always seeks to make amends. Righteous anger always seeks to bring back in the end. Righteous anger never stays angry at the righteous, but seeks to raise up, to repair and restore. Beloved, our sinfulness has us get mad at God and stay mad at God – separating ourselves from our Lord – being apart from His precious gifts and works – becoming god unto ourselves. Unrighteous anger has us stay mad at God and has no need for the repair or restoration of relationships that matter.

Amos knew that there was an important relationship that mattered to the people of God. Destruction came by way of their sins. Restoration came by way of a promise. *“In that day I will restore David’s fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be...”* The Lord would never leave us in His righteous anger by separating us from His promise. That’s where the Epiphany message meets us today, where we are, in this life right now. God comes to raise up, to repair and restore us to Himself. Our imperfections are not so great that our Lord cannot forgive. His restoration and repair is done with hammers, nails and wood. His restoration and repair is done not by using a hammer and nail with His own hands, but rather by His hands being pierced by those who use hammer and nails. His restoration and repair is accomplished with blood and death and resurrection. He restores us to hope and glory. He repairs our broken lives to the promise and hope of salvation in heaven.

This Epiphany, the Word made flesh is made known to the world as God who comes to take away the sins of the world. He fulfills, raises up, repairs and restores. What we have broken, our Lord mends. What is incomplete in our lives because of struggle and suffering is made complete in the struggles and sufferings of the Savior. At Cana, Jesus performs His first miracle – or at least that is what we say. Really in Bethlehem that happened. When God humiliates Himself so much to be like us in every way except without sin – when God Himself comes to repair and restore us to Him and is the light for our life – that is the real first miracle. It’s a blessed miracle that He loves us so much that all this would happen. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.