

October 4, 2015  
Sermon for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Amos 5:6–7, 10-15 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel, <sup>7</sup> O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth! ...

<sup>10</sup> They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. <sup>11</sup> Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. <sup>12</sup> 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 in the gate. <sup>13</sup> Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time. <sup>14</sup> Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. <sup>15</sup> Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Some say that silence is golden. And indeed, as Ecclesiastes tells us, *“There is a time for silence and a time to speak.”*

Knowing when to speak and when to be silent is a most difficult art. Sir Francis Bacon said, “Silence is the virtue of fools.”

Abraham Lincoln said, “Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.”

Martin Luther King Jr. said, “In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.”

All wise words—spoken.

Amos, a prophet of God sent to the corrupt Northern Kingdom of Israel, also speaks about silence. He observes two things about silence.

First, *“Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time”* (v 13).

And, second, he observes, *“They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth”* (v 10).

Silence might keep you personally safe in evil times. But through the prophet Amos, God is teaching us that in the face of evil, one cannot remain silent even if he must endure hatred, because

In the face of evil, silence must be broken, or it can turn deadly.

Silence is evil's best friend. When we turn a blind eye to something that we know is wrong, either out of political correctness or even out of fear, we are condoning the action.

Silence facilitates false worship. Oh, it's just one secular song or just one little change in the Biblical liturgy. But silence is deadly when the people of God are led to false worship under the guise of cultural relevance.

Israel tried it in places like Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba (vv 5–6). They left God behind to follow man's worship styles, sacrificing to false idols and false gods. It brought about devastating results with their being exiled and separated from God.

But silence among the faithful and the leaders meant consent until God spoke through Amos and called Israel in verse 4 to "*Seek me and live*" (v 4).

To "seek" is a "cultic," or "worship," word and by it, God calls His people away from false worship to Himself. Sort of like saying 'I'm here, leave the false behind and see that I am here for you, even though you have forsaken me.'

Our silence is deadly when we remain silent as false religions around us claim human victims and as we fear the reaction of our culture if we should insist loudly and clearly that there is no way to God except through Jesus.

Silence also ignores the cry of the powerless. We might be thankful that we are not under the gun, but that does not mean that we should not speak up for those that are. Silence is deadly when those who have no power are oppressed by those who do.

The city gates in Amos' time were a kind of small claims court, where the poor and disenfranchised could come to seek justice.

But all too often, they found none. *“Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. 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 in the gate”* (vv 11–12).

Our silence is deadly when we do not speak for those who have no voice—the unborn, the elderly, the child, those who suffer here and around the world for the name of Jesus. Again, we might just happy that we are not being persecuted against. If we speak up, they might jump on us.

Silence is concerned only with self-preservation. This isn't new either. Every age will produce a multitude of people who see evil, know it is wrong, but fear man more than God.

A military officer once said that leadership “means running toward the sound of the gunfire.” The simple fact is that most will duck for cover and silently watch as someone else runs toward the gunfire. At most, they will privately tell the one who does speak, “I agree with you,” but will risk nothing.

Our silence in the face of evil may seem “prudent” from the perspective of personal safety and benefit, but by it we stand condemned by the Law of God. Now is not the time for silence but for repentance!

God breaks the silence.

God breaks the silence through His prophets.

Amos was just one of many. Some we know by what they wrote and some by what they said, but their united voice speaks to all generations, and it is a voice that calls us also to repentance and to mourn our silence in the face of evil.

Two thousand years ago, it seemed as if those voices of the prophets had been forever stilled. For the last four hundred years, since the close of the Old Testament, the silence had seemed to reign.

And then there came *“the voice of one crying in the wilderness”* who spoke clearly and directly, just the opposite of those with modern “people skills”:

John the Baptist came right out and called them on the carpet saying:  
*“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee the wrath to come?”*

Here was one who was not “prudent and kept silent in such a time, for it was an evil time as people were again, doing what seemed right in the eyes of men, rather than God.

And yet it was the same John law preacher who pointed to the Christ and said, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

Just as the prophet had spoken the Law, now can he spoke the Gospel.  
God breaks the silence through His Son.

And indeed that Lamb was the One who was spoken about through all the Prophets and now He, the One who was greater than all the prophets, would speak.

We see Him cleansing the temple of a den of thieves.

We see Him challenging the pretentious self-righteousness of Pharisee, Sadducee, and priest alike.

We see him bring justice to those who were oppressed, wholeness to those who were broken, hope to those who suffered.

Jesus was no silent observer of an evil time.

Oh, He could be silent, to be sure. He stood before His accusers and was silent like a lamb before the slaughter.

But this, to be led to the slaughter, is why He had come.

He came to speak the Truth, and that Truth is Himself.

He came to redeem all of us who might trade the truth for our own safety.

He came to be lifted high on the cross, hated for the Truth that He Himself is.

Beaten, wounded, and nailed to that tree.

He came to cry out, "*It is finished!*"

He came to die and enter a tomb.

But Truth cannot be held back by anything, even death.

The message of the resurrection continues to break the silence of every evil time.

It breaks through the silence that would condemn us all with the astounding news that because He lives, we, too, shall.

Listen for the voice that breaks the silence of your life.

Our Lord confronts our silence with the cross, and the Holy Spirit delivers the blessings of that cross through Word and Sacrament.

When we fail to speak up, when we fail in everything, Jesus doesn't

Hear Jesus in the words once spoken over you, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Hear Jesus in the words of absolution, "I forgive you all your sins."

Hear Jesus as you kneel and receive His very body and blood at His table.

He speaks to you and to me and tells us that His life is our life, His peace is our peace, His perfection is our perfection.

Silence can be deadly. But Christ breaks the silence.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus! Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria