

**Michiana Covenant Evening Worship
July 1, 2018**

Call to Worship:

Prayer of Invocation:

Hymn of Praise: TPH 135 “O Praise the LORD! His Praise Proclaim”

Scripture Readings: Amos 5:18-6:14

Sermon: *Triple Woe for the Proud*

A. A Lion... A Bear... A Snake... Oh Die! (5:18-20)

B. Woe to Moralists (5:21-27)

C. Woe to Militarists (6:1-3)

D. Woe to Materialists (6:4-6)

E. Pride will result in Exile (6:7-14)

Congregational Prayer:

The Apostles' Creed:

Lord's Supper:

Closing Hymn: PHSS 154 “I Will Rejoice”

Benediction:

Tonight we'll be returning to the book of Amos ch. 5 & 6, but 1st a little backstory
Centuries prior to Amos' word to Israel **in** the land,
Moses spoke a word to Israel about to enter the land
saying God had led them through the wilderness to **humble** them
So in the land, Israel was to maintain a posture of humility, utter dependence on God

Moses warned them about 3 dangers they were prone to

The 1st warning was this... *When you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, **Take care that your heart be not lifted up and you forget the LORD your God.*** (Deut 8:12-14)

Moses says → Israel, you are prone to **fall in love with all your gifts & forget the Giver**

The 2nd warning came 3 verses later. Moses said, *"beware lest you say in your heart 'my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this'"* (Deut 8:17)

Israel, you are prone to think your accomplishments come from **your own strength**

The 3rd warning was this... *"Do not say in your heart 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess the land'"* (Deut 9:4)

Moses is saying, "you're prone to think you're inherently **more upright than other nations**"

One commentator labels these 3 dangers (Dennis Olson)

Materialism- the danger of loving their possessions

Militarism- the danger of trusting their own strength

Moralism- the danger of trusting in their own righteousness

Materialism, Militarism, and Moralism

3 dangers, each of which undo the humility God called Israel to (P)

And in Amos' day Israel has ignored Moses

I want us to note there are 3 "Woes" in our text

And each correspond to 3 wrong attitudes (bulletin)

Instead of being humble, Israelites are proud of who they are & what they have

Which is why we'll hear after these "3 Woes," God declare *"I abhor the **PRIDE** of Jacob"*

The problem of pride is what is front and center for us tonight (**READ Amos 5:18-6:14**)

Beloved, God **HATES** your pride!

Did you hear how chock full this text is w/ strong language?

I love you too much to sugarcoat how bad your remaining pride is

Our God cannot stand it when we exalt ourselves

And we are prone to amnesia, forgetting we were never meant to stand on our own two feet.
We are who we are by God's grace alone
God alone deserves our affections, God alone is our strength, & God alone is our righteousness

In 1 Cor 10, Paul says OT examples of Israel were written down as instruction for our sake
that we might not desire evil like they did...
and he adds we are those upon whom the end of the ages has come
→ Paul's point **The day is drawing near when God will humble the proud**

Israel in Amos' day has remembered the 1st part of that → The Day of the Lord is coming!
but has lost sight of the 2nd part → The Day of the Lord is **NOT** good news for the proud

Amos says in v. 18 ***Woe*** to you who desire the day of the Lord!
Why would you have the day of the Lord?

Here we see that unlike neighboring pagans, the ancient Church has a proper view of history,
History is not circular, but is ever moving towards the great victory of God
This is the earliest reference in Scripture to the "Day of the Lord",

God's people looked forward to the day when God would crush all of His enemies

There is only one problem w/ Israel's thinking...
They have become God's enemies... which means the Day of the Lord
is not that glorious breaking in of the dawn, but a Day, dark & grim!

To help them see this, Amos provides a scene that is comical to us
But to people who knew folks who died from animal attacks, → not so funny
If you saw a lion up close, he wasn't behind the bars of a cage... You were dead!

Amos says imagine a guy walking down a dirt path, who hears something
He turns around & Egad! There is a lion bearing down on him
Imagine his heart in his throat, he's all heels though no one can outrun a lion
he won't get 20 yards before this beast begins to rip him to shreds.

But somehow, as unfathomable as it is, he gets away
perhaps scurrying upon a cave w/ a opening the lion can't fit through
He escapes the lion! (He cannot believe his luck!)

He waits for several hours until it is finally safe
so he climbs out into the light and **ROAR!** OH No!
He finds he is now face to face w/ an angry bear!
And he is off running for his life again
w/ a 600 lb bear about to rip his head off

But, lucky stars, he sees a house which he dashes into
And there he is safe again, safe from this the angry bear roaring outside!

And he proudly thinks to himself

“I must be the only Israelite to ever survive a lion & bear attack in the same day”
and as he leans on the wall, suddenly he feels a stabbing pain in his hand (P)
The last thing he sees before he collapses and all goes dark,
is a poisonous snake slithering away...

Amos says, “Get the picture, Israel? Day of the LORD for you!

“You really want it??? B/c this is what it will be like for you...

It will be a day of judgment from which you cannot possibly escape

Now Israelites hearing this scene are full of BWA’s (“But What About...”)

They have their own scenes in mind that make this unthinkable

“Amos, but what about our devotion to God, last week’s feast celebrations?

but what about our burnt offerings? (which btw, are the most costly ones)

but what about our grain offerings and peace offerings?

Israel also saw she was on the cutting edge of worship music...

“But Amos, what about the beautiful songs we sing, our trained choir...

We have the best harpists since David!

Doesn’t God hear our music?”

At this point Amos changes the angle from which they view their worship

And lifts them to the heavens to get a different take on the scene as God says...

v. 22 “**I hate**, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, **I will not accept them**;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, **I will not look upon them.**²³ **Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.** ²⁴ **But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**

Here is the answer to every BWA... “God hates all your religious activities!”

Amos is saying here “Woe to **moralists, you** who are so proud of your religion

Israel has had their eyes set on trusting in their righteous activities,

and not been humbly looking up and trusting God

All these things God had prescribed to do in the Torah,

Yet God says through his prophet

“**I hate, I despise, I will not accept, I will not look upon...**

and don’t hear those as simple **future** statements of denial.

The Hebrew sense is emphatic refusal now!

The response to their music is literally in the Hebrew, “you sound like a **noisy mob!**”
And God has now soundproofed heaven so He doesn’t have to hear it (P)

This is important for us to think about

We can choose the best of the best music, have the right liturgy, weekly sacraments...
Our church does it best! We preach through every book of the Bible
We can proudly say to ourselves, we sit through 2 sermons a week
And that takes effort, doesn’t it?

(Like tonight, Pastor Joel looks like he may go for an hour,
“I mean we’re approaching 20 minutes and he is only 7 vv. into the 24
The good news is that God will have to give me extra credit this week...
And don’t tell me you never think sermons can be long here... I’ve sat out there too) (P)

You see the problem of eyes fixed on our religiosity, proud of all that we are doing???
instead of fixing our eyes on God’s worthiness, and what He is accomplishing
It’s all the difference btw worship being a pleasing aroma or a clanging gong !!!)
And I use Paul’s clanging gong b/c of Israel’s lack of love

Israel was saying, “We are the chosen, look at our tithes, hear our beautiful music...”
meanwhile they were living like selfish heathens, no justice or righteousness.

This is just as true today,
I worked at a place where ½ of my coworkers faithfully went to Church,
and yet you would never know it by the way many of them treated others

I saw the same in the churches I grew up in
Part of the excuse I made for walking away from the faith at an early age
is that I began thinking as a teen, what is the point of going through the motions???
claiming this faith when so many were no different than the world?
Why not just stay home and stop faking it?

And that is what God is saying here! →STAY HOME Israel, if all you do is fake worship
The sacrifices and rituals of the Torah were to instruct and *inspire in them a response of love*
They were not to fix their eyes **on what they were doing, but on God & His promises,**
And when you truly get God’s grace to you, you can’t help but want to share it!

A question to ask is→ Do we walk out of here encouraged by God’s grace to love our neighbor
Or→ do we walk out satisfied that we did our religious duties for God,
anesthetized to all the pain right in our own backyards?

Because if the focus is on our religion, we become **moralists**,
forgetting that we are just as wicked as our neighbors apart from grace
Thus, our adoration of God will be fake and will be evident in our ethics

And religion divorced from ethics can never be Christian
Which is why God calls Israel to let justice roll down like water,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream
Which is not happening as Amos says in ch. 6, v. 12
that Israel has turned justice to poison
and the fruit of righteousness to wormwood

I remember first hearing this Amos' verse from MLK Jr's "I have a dream" speech.
Given 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation
MLK Jr rightly said that if America was going claim all were created equal
then why did justice still only **trickle** when it came to the black man?

A half-century later, America is still nowhere close to this sort of justice & righteousness
Especially if you get what the original hearers were hearing Amos say (P)

Now it has been pretty hot here recently!
Crank that heat up, subtract all rain, add a few months, & you have Israel's summer
so bone-dry the streams dry up and Israel becomes helpless, waiting
on the coming rainy seasons, when these streams would finally gush again!
Israel **shrivels & dies** w/o this regular supply of life-giving water

You get this comparison? How essential justice & righteousness were to Israel's faith and life?
And the effects upon them when they forgot the **covenant**?

And I use the word covenant here b/c you have to be connected to God's promise...
Some people have used this text to say going to Church doesn't matter,
We just need to take up social justice causes in order to **please God**
But this cannot happen outside of God's covenant community

No society, including America, has come remotely close to what Amos describes here
The justice & righteousness described here was to come like non-stop waves,
a never-ending source of rushing water that ever cleanses society

Even God's chosen Israel proved over and over to be incapable of producing this
And this is Amos' BIG point, because Israel still doesn't see it!
When Israel fell prey to **moralism**, trusting in their own righteousness,
their justice & righteousness reduced from a trickle to nothing at all!
It was only when Israel trusted God do we ever see a faint picture of what this looks like!

Israel was to hear the Torah & **believe in God's promise** to provide
Which He did by sending Jesus about whom John writes,
*"Out of His heart will flow **rivers of living** water."*

Israel, was **not** to trust in **her worship**, but to worship **trusting in her righteous God**
God sent Jesus b/c no human has ever offered pure worship for a single minute

And Amos proves this by leaving the current scene in Israel
and flipping to a scene on the history channel, Israel's wilderness ancestors in v25-27
Now this text is tricky since v. 26 does not seem to follow from the question
about whether Israel offered sacrifices & offerings in the wilderness.

We know Israel did, and Amos is not suggesting they didn't.
The ESV leaves out an untranslated conjunction that begins v. 26,
which I'll argue should be translated as "while," thus continuing the question of 25

It will then read, ²⁵ *"Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel, **while** taking up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyyun your star-god—your images that you made for yourselves?"*

Amos is asking if Israelites were toting around images of other gods
while they were making sacrifices to the true God... **and the answer is YES**

Joshua's final speech reveals Israelites were still carrying foreign gods
In Acts, **Stephen** quotes Amos right after mentioning the golden calf,
Stephen is actually chiding stiff-necked moralists, including soon to be Paul,
who pre-conversion once thought much of his righteousness

The point Joshua, Stephen, & Amos are all making is Israel was never righteous on its own
Here is a scene of Israel parading through the wilderness carrying the Ark of the Covenant,
and all the while, they're hiding idols in their pockets and in their hearts...

And in our history, we too have our own religious processions & professions,
while we sneak about w/ our own modern idols
Recently, inspired by Amos I began a month long fast from a couple things,
and a week in, I was feeling **really proud** on how well I was doing,
how devoted to God I could be in setting things aside
(Perfect timing on this pride sermon...)

Monday, I found myself in a frustrating situation where I had to wait in the ER for about 5 hrs
At about 9 pm, the thought started coming, why not give up this fast when I get home?
I would really, really enjoy some comfort, the stress relief after all this
In that moment, I discovered the very real pull on my heart.

Now the problem wasn't the thing itself,

but what I **believed** it could do for me in this aggravating situation God placed me in.

It showed how prone I am in my **pride** to turn to things other than God to provide
so I could live as though I was not utterly dependent on Him

So I repented and humbly began to ask God to show me how He was **my only Help**

(I would encourage you to pray about the pull of things on you that feed on your pride
so that you might instead turn and invite Jesus to enter more fully into your life)

(PAUSE)

Amos ends this chapter w/ a sneak peek at the coming exile,

declared by the **God of hosts**... Here is a picture of God w/ His angel army

And this is fitting because in ch. 6,

Amos turns from the moralists to give his 2nd **Woe to Militarists**,

And he changes scenes again in vv. 1-3

*“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, & to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria,
the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes!*

² Pass over to Calneh, and see, and from there go to Hamath the great;

then go down to Gath of the Philistines.

Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory,

*³ O you who put far away **the day of disaster** and bring near the seat of violence?*

We see Amos has not left the idea of the day of the LORD being a **day of disaster**,

Only here he zooms in on those who think they are #1 in their #1 nation...

They also get to be #1 in line to get their exile tickets punched

I must mention that in the Hebrew, the word for “Woe” is not there in v. 4,

Amos is addressing this same haughty group throughout vv. 1-7,

But the ESV rightly sees the “Woe” is doing double duty here

Amos first provides a scene to get at their pride in their security, **militarism**,

before switching scenes to show their pride in **materialism**

In scene 1, Amos reveals 3 underlying attitudes of militarism.

& it is a split-screen view of some men perched on mountains in Jerusalem and Samaria

V. 1's focus is on leaders & power brokers in both Zion & Israel

Amos may be preaching to the no. tribes, but he is an equal opportunity guy

And the house of Israel reference means **everyone** is making pilgrimages to see these fellas,
So while there is a shift away from the worship scene of ch. 5,
you can never get away from worship

Now this 1st underlying attitude is they are at ease, self-absorbed, and secure
This self-confident attitude says, “leave me alone to enjoy **my life**,
don’t lay a guilt trip on me for the poor & needy. That’s their tough luck!
And people flock to feed on their words...

I don’t have to tell anyone here there is a lot of overconfidence by cultural leaders today
folks who want us to hang on their every word and believe their promises,
and there are plenty of pilgrimages to hear them
even if it **just means following** them via social media

So Amos asks these guys to look out from their mountain perches, out at some neighbors
Now we don’t know much about Calneh, a place in Syria, at this time,
but Israel’s king Jeroboam the II had conquered nearby Hamath,
In the south, Uzziah of Judah was now ruling Gath

Both Judah & Israel had kings w/ long reigns and some appreciable military success.
So Amos is asking, “Do you think your military victories make you better than others?”
This is the 2nd wrong attitude & provides a good question for us...
We Americans can look at other places & feel high & mighty

Or as individuals we can look around and find our thoughts drawn to certain people
“I’ve made wiser choices than her, I know more than him, they are weak & I am strong”
When we perch ourselves on our own little mountain, we can grow pretty smug

The 3rd thing is they draw near the seat of violence while pushing away the day of disaster,
And bridging contexts is not hard here.... → Our day is an evil day as well!
Abortion, pornography, pleasure-madness, immorality...
Our culture’s buttocks fit quite nicely into this seat of violence

& our culture pushes away disaster, denying that people will have to face the music
Everywhere is this therapeutic dribble telling us to deny reality
Death is no big deal, “just live it up” so you’ll have no regrets at the end

A hugely popular 2017 pop song called “Sign of the Times” captures this.

The inspiration for the words were a scene w/ a mother who had just given birth,
who then discovered she only had 5 minutes to live...

If you had only 5 minutes to impact your child about what to believe,
what would you say?..... This song is her final words

Just stop your crying. It'll be alright

They told me that the end is near

We gotta get away from here

Just stop your crying

Have the time of your life

Breaking through the atmosphere

And things are pretty good from here

Remember **everything will be alright** (Harry Styles)

Is her death **NOT THE DAY OF DISASTER?**

Yet, her final advice is, “Have the time of your life and **everything will be alright**
Don't cry, everything will be OK! Momma's death is no big deal

This is sad! Where is the foundation to reject crying here? And that is the problem...

Today many claim you cannot prove there is any foundation, so don't worry about it

Now Israel was not postmodern, but I wonder how many were singing a similar tune
when the Assyrians destroyed both Calneh & Hamath & was bearing down on Israel

“Oh it is just a sign of the times, don't cry, everything will be OK”

It is what Jerusalem did as well.

In Isaiah 22, God called for humility & weeping as disaster drew near

but instead there was joy and gladness, people having the time of their life

eating meat and drinking wine saying,

Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die

Disaster is coming, so we need to take the blinders off ourselves & others and weep

Christian posture ought to be the exact opposite of all these proud attitudes,

Instead of carefree and self-absorbed, we ought to be caring and willing to suffer

And instead of being smug when we appear better off

We must remember all we have is a gift to be shared

And what a contrasting posture we find in our final **Woe of materialism** in vv. 4-6

Amos now sets a scene w/ people living it up on beds of ivory, stretched out on couches

This picture recalls the fat cow scene of ch. 4, people are gluttons

eating the best of the flock, the tender cuts of beef

And you cannot have a party w/o some good music

→But Amos mocks the idle songs they love,
as they compare themselves to the great composer David

Of course bad music sounds good when you are drunk

& v. 6 says folks are guzzling such large amounts of wine they have to use bowls

But the Hebrew word here always refers to **sacred bowls**,
they are abusing vessels set apart for religious worship,
They anoint themselves with the finest oils,

Can you picture this scene of indulgence & decadence, yet full of religious overtones?

Meats typically used for sacrifice, sacred bowls w/ wine, anointing oil

It is a worship scene, w/ **MAN** at the center
they please the body while they harden their hearts

Hearts so hardened they can't grieve over Joseph, a reference to their nation...

but I think Amos says Joseph so we'll also have a picture of 10 brothers

who have just thrown their little brother into a well,
and while their brother cries out in distress they sit down to eat

Their **god** is their **belly** as they abuse & plot to sell their kin into slavery

Instead of blessings giving them reason to bless others, their hearts are lifted up

they fell prey to **materialism**, forgot their God, & stopped loving their neighbors

They proudly refuse to help those who cannot help themselves

And because they saw themselves as 1st, they will be exiled 1st...

PRIDE comes before the Fall

Amos gives only 3 verses on the danger of Materialism here,

but they sure say a lot to 21st century America.

When archeologists dig up our empire, and what do you think they'll find?

Lazy boys, refrigerators, alcohol bottles & perfume...

All the revelry of a once proud people will pass just like it did for self-absorbed Israel

Because God will have no rivals as he swears an oath to Himself in v. 8

Declaring His hatred of Jacob's pride, God promises to deliver Samaria over

God should have been their pride, but they exalted self...

Is God our pride? (P)

In our final point, the Divine Lion begins to show the proud what is coming.

And these last 7 verses are sort of a blur as the reader is yanked from 1 scene to another

First, we have a two act play that begins w/ 10 men who seek refuge in a house... **& ALL DIE**
This recalls the earlier 100 man army scene where 10 survived → and now there is ZERO.

We see what comes to those proud of their **militarism**

Then we get a close-up w/ a relative, “Uncle Undertaker” who arrives to embalm the dead
The only ones left among the living are gravediggers who have learned the fear of the Lord
as the one tells the other to “hush” for fear he may accidentally utter the Lord’s name
and summon back the presence of the Divine Lion.

We see there is no one left to trumpet their **moralism**

It’s quite the difference from those who were cheering on the Day of the Lord
it’s also quite the contrast from the gluttonous party scene... all are reduced to skeletons

We see what comes to those proud of their **materialism**

Then a scene where God speaks in v. 11 and all houses, great and small, are reduced to rubble

Amos breaks into this devastation w/ a couple more images

Do horses run on rocks, or more literally, on a cliff? And the answer is “NO”
or plow the sea with oxen? → NO

But servants of God have corrupted justice and righteousness,
absurd behavior showing they are **more foolish than animals**

Right now they rejoice in victories over the Syrians at Karnaim & Lo-debar,
and Amos deliberately misspells Lo-Debar so it literally means “nothing”
Amos says you proud folks rejoice in nothing

And then God finally announces the means by which He will bring down the proud,
He will raise up a nation who will oppress Israel from Lebo-hamath in the north,
to the Brook of the Arabah in the south, from one end to the other

We are left w/ a sneak peek of the future as we come to the end of our text

And we can praise God if we have held on and made it through this whirlwind finish
jumps from one scene to another, many angles, contrasting pictures

I was asking myself, what is Amos doing here w/ this collage of scenes at the end?

This arrangement of scenes in meant to unsettle the prideful,
if they remain stuck in their claustrophobic little kingdom looking out
they will never see reality so Amos pulls them out where they don't want to go
kinda like when **Scrooge** is pulled out of bed in the night
and taken all over to see the real world from new perspectives, including what is coming

Amos yanks them out of their self-centered kingdoms,
they see their Pride and its results from many angles,
that they might recall the first half of Amos sermon, and "seek the Lord & live"
Sadly, most of Israel did not repent & believe and judgment came. (P)

There is a final scene I want to leave you w/
You see, Amos 5 and 6 was not given just for Israel, but for our instruction,
full of examples that we might not desire evil like they did,
because we are those upon whom the **end of the ages** has come

Israel's Day of the Lord was only a preview of a far greater Day to come
So we need to consider the scene in which we are living...
The sermon is ending and if Jesus does not return tonight,
you will wake up tomorrow with many temptations to pride.

To put your trust in human abilities, the comforts of this life, in your good works & not in X's
Thoughts will come that you don't need to pray & weep
Choose the couch instead of the cross, look down on others and feel good
Next week's scene is full of stumbling blocks to trick you into forgetting
your utter dependence on God

Beloved, there is no other way to **LIVE**, than to seek Him and His righteousness...
We cannot play w/ a useless religion while the world around us rots
God wants to bless us, but we must be who we were created & redeemed to be,
humble wilderness servants who love God & neighbor...

Something we admit we can't do on our own which is why we look to **Jesus**
who came in our flesh to resist the 3 temptations of moralism, materialism, & militarism
in this wilderness when He faced our enemy Satan

This week I encourage you to look to **Jesus** for your strength/ righteousness/ provision
To Him who walked humbly, knowing that Man only lives by every Word from God
To Him who never sinned, was never prideful, yet He was exiled from the land
and the judgment of a foreign nation came upon Him
to save all who would look to Him!

There is no hope in the final scene of chapter 6 of Amos,
but we live in a new scene this week where we can look to **Jesus**
who has passed through the judgment and wants to lead you through it as well

Which means as you enter into next week's scene
Ask yourself in what ways are you not relying on God,
which you in your pride turn to something other than Him?
And ask **Jesus** to enter into that situation and set you free.
The walk of humility, the way of the cross, is the way to glory
Seek Jesus & His Kingdom & I promise you will live

