

Sermon for September 21, 2025 – Pentecost 15

Amos 6:1-7a (EHV)

Theme: **Where do you find your comfort?**

- 1) In your gifts, or
- 2) In your God?

Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you distinguished people of the leading nation, to whom the house of Israel comes. ²Travel to Kalneh and look. Go from there to Hamath Rabbah, and go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than those kingdoms? Are their territories greater than your territory? ³You who are trying to put off the evil day, you bring near the session for violence! ⁴Those who lie on ivory beds, sprawling upon their couches, eating lambs from the flock and calves straight from the stall, ⁵improvising tunes on the lyre, composing music for themselves on musical instruments like David, ⁶drinking large bowls of wine— they slather themselves with the most expensive perfumed oils, but they do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. ⁷That is why they will go into exile as the first of the exiles.

56 years ago, a survey was conducted about the “typical American” that I believe applies to Canadians as well. Its conclusions were printed in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune,ⁱ a snippet of which reads:

“The “typical American” is a twenty-seven-year-old who does not read one book a year. He is materialistic, satisfied with small pleasures, and bored with theological disputations. Although he may attend church twenty-seven times a year, and leave his offspring at the church nursery school, he isn’t interested at all in the transcendent or supernatural or the life everlasting. Of all the men interviewed in this survey, not a single one would confess that he meditated or worried about heaven, hell or personal immortality... apparently, our typical American couldn’t care less. According to this survey, his principal interests are football, hunting, fishing, and tinkering with automobiles.”

In response to this survey, the author of the newspaper article concluded:

“A people who don’t worry about the destination of the soul soon becomes a soulless people. Men whose whole interest in life is petty amusements and petty possessions do not deserve that immortality for which mankind was made. “Seek and it shall be given unto you.” But for those who never look up from their round of trifling diversions, there remains the descent into the hell of indifference.”

Sobering words, which lead me to ask: have things gotten any better in our Western society, or worse? Are we also becoming a nation of soulless people, descending into the hell of indifference?

That’s the very question our sermon text from Amos confronts us with today, which we will consider under the theme: **Where do you find your comfort?** *In your gifts or in your God?*

Part One – In your gifts?

Amos preached during a time of great prosperity in Israel. Outwardly, life looked good. They had wealth, power, and success. But beneath the surface lay corruption, greed, and contempt for God's commands. Israel's political leaders took advantage of the poor instead of taking care of them. Its spiritual leaders led them into idolatry. They pursued pleasure and ignored God's call to repentance, which is why Amos preached:

Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you distinguished people of the leading nation, to whom the house of Israel comes.

Zion was the capital of Judah, and Mount Samaria was the capital of Israel. The leaders of these nations, having achieved recent military victories, believed themselves to be invincible and secure.

But Amos warned:

²Travel to Kalneh and look. Go from there to Hamath Rabbah, and go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than those kingdoms? Are their territories greater than your territory? ³You who are trying to put off the evil day, you bring near the session for violence!

The nations Amos mentioned were all proud and mighty at one time but were conquered and fell into obscurity because of their impenitence. Israel's fate would be no different.

Israel's leaders, however, laughed off these warnings as the ramblings of a fool.

It is interesting to note that, while Israel chose to ignore Amos's warnings, the Assyrians repented and reformed at Jonah's preaching – so much so that God not only spared them from the wrath He threatened, but chose to use them to execute His judgment upon Israel.

Therefore, Amos continued:

Woe to you... Those who lie on ivory beds, sprawling upon their couches, eating lambs from the flock and calves straight from the stall, ⁵improvising tunes on the lyre, composing music for themselves on musical instruments like David, ⁶drinking large bowls of wine—they slather themselves with the most expensive perfumed oils, but they do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.

Amos' words paint a graphic picture of the moral decay that Israel's excessive wealth and materialism had caused. Its leaders sprawled out on expensive dining couches, gorging themselves on the finest and fattest meats. They drank wine like water and excessively slathered themselves with expensive oils. They made a farce of religion, parodying David's Psalms for the entertainment of praising themselves instead of the LORD. Sadly, the one thing they refused to care about was *the ruin of Joseph* (Israel's moral corruption).

Yes, the Kingdom of Israel was a spiritual disaster, ruled by greed and materialism. The poor were exploited, justice perverted, and, worst of all, the Gospel was not proclaimed. The only thing the spiritual and political leaders of Israel cared about was their financial gain, for which reason Amos warned:

⁷That is why they will go into exile as the first of the exiles.

Judgment was coming. Assyria would reduce Israel to a memory, destroying its wealth and exiling its people to foreign nations. And Israel's leaders would be the first to depart.

Now, if that is how God judged His chosen nation, whom He mercifully delivered out of Egypt, how do you think He will deal with our Western society, which also refuses to repent of its selfish, wicked ways?

But before we think that Amos' warning only deals with people outside these church walls, let me read to you how WELS Professor Eichmann, the author of *The People's Bible Commentary on Amos*, applies this text. He writes:

“It is not difficult for us in prosperous times to look around and see an all-consuming concern for pleasure in the citizens of our country. We need to remember that Amos is speaking to God's chosen people Israel, and that today his words apply particularly to Christians. We who call ourselves disciples of Jesus in this favored land also enjoy the prosperity of our times. We buy comfortable furniture, eat and drink at expensive restaurants, listen to beautiful music on fine stereo systems.

We say that our wealth is a gift of God. But is it also true that we do not grieve over the ruin of his church? Are we unconcerned whether our pastors are teaching what the Bible teaches, as long as our congregation has an impressive physical plant? Do we take no measures to protect even our own families against the moral laxity that rules the world? Do we wrap ourselves so tightly in a soft cocoon of luxury that we live unaware of people suffering for lack of food, clothing, and a roof over their heads? Do we spend so generously on ourselves that little is left to give for preaching the good news among those who have not heard it? Then Jesus reproves our unbelief and warns us with the words he said to the unbelieving elders of the Jews: “I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit (Matthew 21:43).”

Those words sting, don't they? They sting me. Too often, I have cared more about my comfort than about Christ's kingdom. Too often, I have turned a blind eye to the needs of those around me to focus on my wants instead of their needs. Haven't you done the same? This realization compels me to pray: “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner! Forgive me for Jesus' sake!”

Part Two: In Your God.

And here is the good news: the LORD preserved Amos' warning not just to condemn us, but to lead us to repentance — and to lead us to Christ.

Jesus is the answer to our selfishness and sin. He lived the perfect life of love that we have failed to live. He cared for the poor, fed the hungry, healed the sick, preached good news, and above all kept His Father's will. Then on the cross, He took our sins upon Himself — our greed, our complacency, our selfishness — and bore God's judgment in our place.

In that great exchange, Jesus traded His righteousness for your sin so that, through faith in Him, His holiness would be counted as your holiness.ⁱⁱ Now, when God looks at you, He no longer sees your failures. He sees the perfect record of His Son.

Regarding our forgiveness, the apostle Paul writes: *⁴ But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses.... ⁸ Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.*ⁱⁱⁱ

And this last verse I just read brings me to the final point I want to make in this sermon: Because we are saved through faith in Jesus, adopted as God's children through the waters of Holy Baptism and given His Spirit to guide us in holy living, let us do the good God prepared us to do and loved one another as unselfishly as Christ loved us. Let us pray for the Church and support our congregation's efforts to share the Gospel. Let us help the helpless and be generous with the money God grants us, ready to dedicate our lives to the LORD as He has dedicated His life for us.

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, let me ask you again: where do you find your comfort and security? Is it in yourself and your possessions? May that never be! Instead, find your comfort and security in Christ alone, who lived, died and rose for you.

And in the peace of His forgiving love, live for others as He lived for you. Amen.

ⁱ Sarasota Herald-Tribune on February 10, 1969

ⁱⁱ Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21

ⁱⁱⁱ Ephesians 2:4-5a,8-10 EHV