

“Is it me? Or has the world gone mad?” **By Martin Huburn**

In my last sermon we looked at how God calls us and how we should respond when He calls us.

Today, we continue in the sermon series from the book of Amos. And we will be looking at people who lack moral guidance and need God in their lives. But first I wanted to share with you a quick story.

One day, there was an atheist walking through the woods, admiring all that evolution had created. **“What majestic trees! What powerful rivers! What beautiful animals!”**

Behind him, he could hear rustling in the bushes. Out came a grizzly bear and the atheist man took off running followed closely by the bear.

The man tripped up and just as the bear raised his paw to strike the man, he shouted **“God, help me!”**

All of a sudden everything stopped and a voice came from heaven saying **“You have dismissed me all these years. Now all of a sudden you ask for my help.”**

The atheist thinks for a moment and said **“Well yes I would be a hypocrite if I asked for your favour right now, so instead, may I ask, could you make the bear a Christian? That’s a fair compromise, right?”**

All of a sudden, life re-starts, the bear puts his paws together and starts to pray

“Dear heavenly father, thank you for the food for which you have given me, help it nourish me in Jesus name, Amen.”

How quick are people to dismiss God?

So, is it me? Or has the world gone mad?

The message delivered by Amos to the people of Israel has a pattern in the early chapters of the book and today we will be looking at Israel’s neighbours, who are *Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab* and what they had done wrong.

Each rebuke for the neighbours starts in **Amos 1:3**, and continues through to Amos 2: 3 and the pattern remains the same.

Let us look at the first one, this is the rebuke of Damascus in Syria.

Amos 1: 3 – 5 says,

³ This is what the LORD says:

**“For three sins of Damascus,
even for four, I will not relent.**

**Because she threshed Gilead
with sledges having iron teeth,**

**⁴ I will send fire on the house of Hazael
that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad.**

**⁵ I will break down the gate of Damascus;
I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Aven
and the one who holds the sceptre in Beth Eden.**

**The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir,”
says the LORD.**

Let me break this down, each rebuke starts with **“This is what the Lord says.”**

What Amos is telling Israel is “These are the words of God, not the words of Amos.”

Amos’s message is aimed at Israel’s neighbours, at first. All of these nations were enemies of Israel and these nations refused to follow and obey God.

Just like Israel, in Britain, we are also surrounded by people who lack God in their lives and have no moral guidance, such as bullies, football hooligans, gangs, drug users, thieves, terrorists etc the list goes on and on. It is these people that cause the British society to live in fear and misery.

In verse 3 the pattern continues “for the three sins of....(Neighbour of Israel) **Actually, make that four sins.**” In other words *Israel’s neighbours* are committing sin after sin after sin.

And again we see that the people that surround us are just like the neighbours of Israel, they don’t think about anyone but themselves and continue to live the way they want to live.

Amos goes on to say **Amos 1: 3** says,

³ This is what the LORD says:

**“For three sins of *Damascus*,
even for four, I will not relent.**

“I will not relent” means that God is going to punish these people for continuing in their sinful ways.

Because of that lack of guidance, people don’t see the need for God. And nothing has changed from the days of Amos to the present day. But let me say this, when the day of judgement comes these people who spend their lives causing other people to be miserable are going to be punished by God.

So, is it me? Or has the world gone mad?

As we read on, the rebuke continues. Amos then tells the people of Israel what sin against humanity the particular neighbour has committed

³ “Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth,”

Damascus were bullying the weaker nations and committing sins of violence

⁶ “Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom,”

Gaza were capturing people and selling them as slaves.

⁹ “Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood,”

Tyre had lied and not kept their promises to their neighbouring countries.

¹¹ “Because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked,”

Edom were committing sins of anger, hatred and rage.

¹³ “Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders,”

Ammon wanted more land and was filled with greed.

Amos 2: 1

“Because he burned to ashes the bones of Edom’s king,”

Moab were disrespectful to its neighbours people and their traditions.

But if we look at all of the sins mentioned that the neighbours were guilty of, all of them are sins against humanity. Just like how so many people are all over the world, people are causing people to live in fear and or misery and they are doing it time and time and time again.

Let me put this into a more modern perspective and explain what type of people that I am talking about. Also let us look at the type of sins they are committing.

I’ve got to be honest, today’s society scares me. Society has become so erratic and random. There seems to be a rage building up through the youth of today, where if you even look at someone in the wrong way, the chances are you’re going to end up in a fight. Some people look for any excuse to start a fight, pull out a knife or a gun, which is becoming even more common in this country. We live in a world that is becoming very quickly, un-civilized.

I read a story not too long ago about a woman that was attacked by a group of thugs aged between 10 and 13. The attack was totally random and out of the blue, she was making her way home when she passed this group of kids. Being as they were quite young she didn’t feel threatened but as she was passing they decided to jump her.

She said “I can’t believe that children could act like a pack of wild animals.”

Romans 1:28-31

²⁸ “Because those people refuse to keep in mind the true knowledge about God, he has given them over to corrupted minds, so that they do the things that they should not do. ²⁹ They are filled with all kinds of wickedness, evil, greed and vice; they are full of jealousy, murder, fighting, deceit, and malice. They gossip ³⁰ and speak evil of one another; they are hateful to God, insolent, proud, and boastful; they think of more ways to do evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they have no conscience; they do not keep their promises, and they show no kindness or pity to others.”

This sounds just like the world we live in doesn’t it?

Paul is warning us here to be careful of the world and its lack of morals and filthy actions. It might look like fun to some people that don’t care about one another.

But isn’t this just like animals? Animals have no real morals. They live for food, power and territory. If we live without God in our lives we are going to end up acting like animals.

And what is unfortunate and sad is that a vast majority of people find strength in these things.

I look back to the recent riots around the UK. The police couldn’t use any kind of force to stop these youths.

Not many years ago the cane was abolished in schools as punishment and parents have to be careful how they go about disciplining their children. Power is slowly being taken away from the parents and authorities and is being put into the hands of children.

Has anyone here seen the film “A Bugs Life?”

Well it’s a story about a misfit Ant called ‘Flik’ that gets kicked out of the ant colony and

ends up with a bug circus. The ant colony is having problems with a group of grasshoppers and the leader of the group is called 'Hopper'. Hopper uses scare tactics to get the ants to gather food for the grasshoppers but Flik, the misfit ant tries to stand up against the grasshoppers. One of the grasshoppers turns to Hopper and says "It's just one ant, why worry about just one ant". Hopper's reply makes so much sense. "The ants outnumber us, one ant we can deal with, maybe two or even three ants. But what happens when the whole colony join together?"

See, what actually happens when these kids realise that they actually have the power? Well, the riots and looting that happened around the UK last year demonstrate just a minor sign of what can happen when kids join forces.

So, is it me? Or has the world gone mad?

Please don't think I'm talking about all kids, I know there are still kids in the world that have moral standards.

In fact let me tell you about a man that fainted the other day.

The man fainted as he came out of his front door onto the porch. The person who saw it dialled 999. When the ambulance arrived, the crew helped the man regain consciousness. They asked him if he knew what caused him to faint.

"It was enough to make anybody faint," he said. My son asked for the keys to the garage and instead of driving the car out, he came out with the lawn mower!"

See, some kids will do the unexpected.

But as we can see more and more people are lacking moral guidance, discipline and direction in their lives.

Some people just don't care about people anymore. They know how they should be acting but all they care about is themselves.

Paul goes on to say in Romans 1: 32,

32 "They know that God's law says that people who live in this way deserve death. Yet, not only do they continue to do these things, but they even approve of others who do them."

Let us think about evil leaders and dictators such as: - Adolph Hitler; Saddam Hussein; Bin Laden; Col. Kaddafi and Castro etc. Even these people gained followers because their ideas and plans seemed radical and rebellious. People like to follow things that involve chaos and approve their actions however far from God they are.

So, is it me? Or has the world gone mad?

Then we get to how God will punish the neighbours.

4 I will send fire on the house of Hazeal that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad.

7 I will send fire on the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses.

10 I will send fire on the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses."

12 I will send fire on Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah."

14 I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle,

Amos 2:2

2 I will send fire on Moab that will consume the fortresses of Kerioth.

See they all say “God will send fire upon them” and this is judgment talk.

I found this interesting, because Jesus tells us in Matthew 13: 41 and 42,

41 “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out all the stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus is saying that all of these things that cause us to sin are temporary they won't last and all of the people that continue to base their lives in these things are going to perish.

And in Revelation 21: 8

8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral person and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

So for those that continue to live in sin, when judgment comes, they are going to be punished with fire and brimstone.

So, Is it me? Or Has the world gone mad?

I heard a story about a man who had this crazy dog.

He would always bark and snarl every time people would go past it and it would try and go for other dogs.

One of the neighbours put together a petition to try and get something done about the dog.

He said to another neighbour **“Please sign our petition to get rid of that dog, it just terrorises the neighbourhood and the kids are scared to go out and play just in case it gets loose and bites them”**

But the neighbour turned round and said

“But it's got a lovely set of teeth”

The sermon that Amos is preaching is to the people of Israel,

but I have a question,

why is Amos telling the people of Israel about their enemies?

The people from the neighbouring countries weren't there in Israel.

And why am I preaching this sermon to you?

I'm sure none of you are committing physical sins against humanity,

So is it to get the people we are preaching to onside, by saying how God is going to punish the people we hate and detest?

Thank God it's them not us, right?

WRONG.....

A boxer is always taught to keep watching both hands but also keep using the jab to distract their opponent from expecting the big right hand, a magician uses one hand to

distract their audience while the other hand is doing the magic trick, in American football a team will try and run the ball to one side but when their opponents are expecting them to come one way they end up miss-directing and going the opposite direction. And I believe this is the technique that God used through Amos.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:43 – 46,

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?”

What Jesus is saying here is if we only love the people that love us what good is that? Isn't that the same as the rest of the world? All people love people that love them.

As Christians we have a prerogative to be different from the rest of the world.

I think what Amos's message was supposed to be doing was to get God's chosen people to look inwards, to remember who God is and to show the people of Israel that sin is sin no matter who is committing it. Jesus tells us to love our enemies in other words “Love the sinner but hate the sin”

Jude 22 – 23 says -

²² “Be merciful to those who doubt, ²³ snatch others out of the fire and save them, to others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”

So do we see sin how God sees sin? Do we have compassion for the people of the world? Are we going to go out and tell them about Jesus and how His blood has the power to redeem them from their many iniquities? Or are we going to be like Israel and be happy that these people are going to be lost forever? Because God IS going to punish all people that dismiss Him and the gospel. If we don't show them or tell them, we are as guilty as the people of the world, as we are now letting people die spiritually and letting them go to hell instead of showing them a way to live.

Romans 1: 16 – 17

¹⁶ “ I am **not ashamed** of the **gospel** which is the **power of God** for the **salvation of everyone** who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.””

Paul tells us not to be ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God, not for just me, you and everyone here, Paul tells us that it is for everyone that believes.

Romans 10:11 says

¹¹ “As the scripture says, “He who believes in Him will not be disappointed.””

Paul is quoting Isaiah 28:16, and reiterates Whoever believes in God won't be disappointed.

In fact, Jesus said in John 3:16,

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that He sent His only son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life”

I don't think anyone will be disappointed in everlasting life

Paul then goes on to say in Romans 10: 12 – 13,

¹² "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses **all** who call on Him, ¹³ for, **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

See there is no difference between us and those that live in sin. In fact Paul said earlier in the same letter Romans 3: 23,

²³ "**all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Paul then says in Romans 6:23

²³ "**The wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

All of us have sinned and fall short of God's glory but we received the gift of God which is eternal life because of what Jesus has already done for us.

But how can unbelievers call on Him, if they do not know who He is?

Well Paul continues in Romans 10: 14

¹⁴ "How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

Paul's telling us here that believing comes through hearing and it is up to us as believers to share the gospel, if we don't share it how will people believe and come to know God? See God is going to punish these people partly because we haven't fulfilled a commandment of God. I believe that if we aren't willing to share the gospel, **we** are also guilty of crimes against humanity, not a physical crime but a spiritual one. Because that is exactly how we should view sin as 'spiritual crimes.'

Let us read Romans 1: 16 – 17 again my adelphoi,

¹⁶ "I am **not ashamed** of the **gospel** which is the **power of God** for the **salvation of everyone** who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith.""

So is it me? Or has the world gone mad? My adelphoi, everyone needs moral guidance and God in their lives.

As believers we have the power from God to make a difference in the world, so let me encourage you to use God's power to "keep making the difference." God bless.