

“God’s Lamentation”
Pastor John Bronson

Amos 5:1-27

November 10, 2013

Order of Worship for 11/11/13, title, “God’s Lamentation”, text, Amos 5:1-27
Opening Song:

Welcome and Invocation: Isaiah 1:12-17

Message theme: When we worship God we bring our hearts to Him and lay them down before Him and the Lord knows, the Lord examines our hearts and it is to our hearts that He listens

Worship theme: God’s longsuffering and generous love for us

Opening Song: “Battle Hymn of the Republic” Hymnal #804
Welcome

Invocation: Isaiah 1:12-17

Ministry Moment: Military Support Group, Ruth Bowen

Preparing the Heart in Song:

“Behold our God” Overhead

“Behold What Manner of Love” Hymnal # 708

“Be Thou My Vision” Hymnal # 562

Offering and Offertory: “The Lord is My Shepherd” by Hosanna

Message: “God’s Lamentation” Amos 5:1-27 Pastor John Bronson

Response to the Word: “Lord Be Glorified” Hymnal # 186

Parting Word of Grace and Invitation to Prayer

Sunday Evening in the Word: 5:30-7 pm in the Church Library

False Prophets in the Old Testament and the New: 2 Peter 2:1-10

Prayer Closet

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: Jeremiah Gonzales, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (wife Jennifer): for safety in travel and at work

President Obama: Pray that he would humble himself as he leads this country through the difficulties that confront our nation. That he would surround himself with Godly people to lead our country back to God.

Missions Team: Please pray for our Missions Team: Dennis and Dorothy Hurt, Don and Penny Remley, Bev Halus, Margie Hedrick, Sheryl Jackson and Linda Reed. That God would give them discernment as they work with missionaries and mission organizations

Young Adult of the Week: Alexis Ewing: a house for my family and peace for our hearts

As we undertake to look at the Word of God today in Amos, the title is “The Dreams of our Father.” The text is Amos 5:1-27, the entire chapter, which is a long section to read straight through, so I will read it portion by portion and I trust we will be able to draw in the entirety of what the prophet, what God wanted to say through the prophet at this time.

Amos begins by saying, *“Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel.”* That is, in fact, the state of my own heart in consideration of my own nation. I would hope that as you respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and reflect upon what you know of what is happening in our nation, you will identify with the lamentation. Amos says that he sings a lamentation for Israel. A lamentation is a song of great sorrow, generally in association with the death of someone, someone loved, or generally the loss of anything held to be great or precious. A lamentation celebrates a great loss, and that is exactly what Amos is doing in response to what has happened in Israel, and you and I might consider whether a lamentation is our proper portion today.

The lamentation is for Israel. In 5:2 Amos goes on to say, *“Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel, forsaken on her land with none to raise her up.”* Amos refers to Israel as a virgin. If we have read Amos up to this point, let alone having read the entirety of the Bible you have to wonder how on earth can he refer to Israel as a virgin as if she was a pure and undefiled person? The question would arise if perhaps Amos is speaking with a sort of bitter irony, and surely he is in part. Israel is no virgin. If you go forward in fact to the end of this chapter to verses 25-27 you can see immediately that obviously Amos has no illusions regarding the purity of Israel even from her earliest days. This is what he writes there: *“‘Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness?’ That is a reference to the Exodus wanderings, the beginning of the life of that nation. ‘Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You shall take up Sikkuth your king and Kiyun your star god, your images that you made for yourselves, and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,’ says the God of Hosts.”* The statement is that from the outset this is an idolatrous people. They have not been faithful to the Lord. How then can this possibly be a virgin? We need to understand the way Amos is speaking. The virginity of Israel is not a description of her condition; it is the articulation of His grace. God is saying through His servant Amos that He has loved them as if they were a virgin, and that His objective is that they will become one. Amos’ lamentation is not at this point a lamentation or a weeping, a song of sorrow for a virginity lost, but rather for a restoration to purity declined, and therefore a hope rejected.

Israel has fallen, forsaken, no more to rise. She has rejected the saving God. The word by the way used in that verse for “fallen” is not the word for a stumble along the way or even a faint, but rather it describes the word for a fall resulting from a violent assault, almost like Israel has been thrown to the ground. That would be the right way to take that comment. It actually foreshadows the third verse. *“The city that went out a thousand shall a hundred left...”* Nine hundred of her thousand soldiers slaughtered. *“...and that which went out a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.”* To our ears that is bad news, tremendous loss. For Israel, for the covenant people of God to hear that kind of statement is a reversal of the covenant of God’s grace, for He had said that no one will ever defeat you, you will stand against all of your enemies. Now He is saying, no, it is done, it is over, lost. This will be your portion.

Dropping down to verses four and five and also to fourteen and fifteen it looks as if God through Amos is extending a possibility; there is still a possibility of grace here. So he says these things: *“Seek me and live...”* *“Seek*

good and not evil, that you may live. . .” *“Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate. . .*” But as we look at those verses – I encourage you to read through them – we have to remember that this is a lamentation. This is part of a song of sorrow, a song of loss. And if it is to be understood correctly we have to recognize in this kind of manner; it is a rhetorical kind of statement, as if he was saying, “Israel do you remember what the Lord said to you long ago and many times since? Over and over again He has sent prophets. Over and over again He has sent the invitation: seek Me, seek Me, seek Me. And over and over again you have said, No thanks; I’ve got other things to do.

Seek Me, not Bethel. What was Bethel? Bethel was the city where Jeroboam, the first king of the northern ten tribes, put a golden calf for apostate worship. Don’t go to Gilgal? What was Gilgal; what was Beersheba? Each of these was a place of false worship, worship that blended paganism with selected parts of the revealed truth of God and the covenant. God’s cry is that they not rely on false worship but seek Him according to the revealed truth that He had given in His word. Seek the Lord and live: such was the constant appeal from the Living God. What was the alternative? In verse 6 he says if you don’t seek Me, if you don’t reconcile with Me, if you don’t come home to where you ought to be, fire! Fire [will burn] in the house of Joseph, and it will devour with none to quench it for Bethel. The question arises: who can quench the fire of God? Only God, only God can quench the fire of God, the fire of judgment. So they have to find God. They have to make contact with God. We have to seek Him and find Him in order to appeal to Him to stop the fire. How do you do that? That is what he talks about in 4:4 and 5:7.

You might recall that Israel was all about sacrifice, Israel was all about ritual, all about the show and pomp and display of religiosity, even the giving of tithes and great freewill offerings. “Maybe we can satisfy God by a great outpouring of sacrificial giving. “Amos 4:4 you might recall that the people said to one another, “Bring your offerings, your sacrifices every morning, bring your tithe every three days.” But when Amos speaks God’s judgment against them, he does not speak only of their religious actions. See verse 7: *“You who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth.”* The message here is not that worship is inappropriate or a waste of time. God delights in the worship of His people. See the reference in Psalm 108:1-5. This is a wonderful statement from our God and His delight when God’s people gather to worship Him. *“My heart is steadfast, O God! I will sing and make melody with all my being! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth.”* Try getting up some morning and singing that song. Open your hearts and say, “Please come in!” I have a horrible time when I am singing. If I let myself think too much about God I just start weeping and then I can’t sing, and then Nini wonders what is the matter with me. So I have to be cautious! To understand the living presence of God, and to understand that He delights in the worshiping heart, He delights in the mind that feeds upon His righteousness and truth, that He delights in us as His children, that He wants us to be with Him!

However, worship is not something we can do in isolation from the rest of our lives. Worship must reflect who we are, how we think, how we feel, and how we act all the time. We may meet to worship in a place and a moment in time. We have met here to meet with God at a moment in time. But we should never become confused into thinking that this is where God *is*. God is not a golden calf. God is not even a cross. God in fact is in the world, and the world is in God. Indeed, we are in God. Acts 17:28 Paul makes this comment when speaking to the [citizens] in Athens,. *“In Him we live and move and have our being.”* There is no time, day or night, that you are

outside or away from the presence of God. When Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem he made a great prayer, and in that prayer (1 Kings 8:27-29) this is what he said: *“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built? Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, that your eyes may be open night and day towards this house, the place of which you have said, ‘My name shall be there. . .’”* Now let me explain something: when we gather together in the presence of the Lord, our eyes need to be fixed on a specific place. That place is Jesus Christ, Who died upon the cross and rose up again from the grave. He died for sinners. If you are not a sinner, you are wasting your time here. Jesus died for sinners. But if you are just a sinner you are wasting your time here. For Jesus died for sinners who are willing to receive the gift of life that He gives through His shed blood, knowing that that blood was shed for my sins. If you make that confession, God is rejoicing! But if you do not make that confession, God is waiting. He is waiting. And He waited for Israel. And He waited, and He waited, and He waited.

It is essential for us to understand that when we worship God we bring to Him our hearts, and we lay them down before Him, and the Lord knows and the Lord examines our hearts, and it is to our hearts that He listens. Let me read what was read so well before: (Isaiah 1:12-17)

“When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocation—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bring them. When you spread out your hand, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”

Those are the words of God, and they are directed to us. We know these things. I am sure that I have not spoken anything that you are not at least peripherally aware of. Israel knew those things, knew them well for she was often reminded of them. But Israel preferred to forget them. Israel preferred a smaller god. So Amos says to her, (5:8-9) *“He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the Lord is His name; who makes destruction flash forth against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.”* This is not a small God. This is the God of Israel. This is the God she rejected.

So Amos sings his lamentation, for Israel has chosen the way of death, and there is no escape unless she returns to the God she has rejected. There is more in those verses than meets the English reader’s eye. This is the inevitable consequence of translation. The word that is used for “darkness” and “darken” in this passage is not the normal word used for night. It is instead a word used to refer to the darkness of death. What Amos is saying, God through Amos, is that God is able to turn the dark night of death into the dawn of life; but he is also saying He is able to turn the life-light of day into the darkness of death. This is our God. We are dealing here with allusions to judgment. That is why one of the commentators when speaking of this verse said the reference to the waters of sea – I had always thought [God] pours them out as lovely rain – [is a reference] to the Noahic judgment, the flood that washed over the earth, covered it entirely and cleansed out an entire generation of sin. Oh! Do we think the United States is vulnerable to the judgment of God? Yes, beloved, yes [it is]!

In Amos 5:10-13 Amos presents a compelling picture of the dynamics of life in Israel, not the entirety of that life, but the selected portions that is relevant to God’s word of judgment. First we hear an echo of an earlier statement. If you look to 2:12 you read this: “*You commanded the prophets, saying, ‘You shall not prophesy. . .’*” They had forbidden the prophets to speak. Here we see the same again. “*They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. 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 righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.*” Having turned away from the God of righteousness and truth the Israelites are now in a state where they hate those who remind them, they hate those who expose their sin, they abhor. That is not peculiar to Israel in ancient days. You might recall that not long ago we did a study of John in this congregation, and right at the very beginning, in John 3:19 the Apostle makes this observation: “*This is the judgment: the light has come into the world [Jesus], and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*” Humanity has not changed. Peter says the same thing in I Peter 4:3-4, “*For the time past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you. . .*” To malign is to speak evil of you, it is to slander you, it is to attack you and to attack your character; it is to cast you outside of any relevant group; it is to throw you down and say, this is not a person worth paying attention to. “Gentiles” is how Peter refers to the lost.

Beloved, we are fools if we think fallen men and women seek God. You cannot read the Bible and come to that conclusion. But they do seek something, and this should make sense to us. What they seek, what the lost seek is blessings. How many want to be blessed: of course, all humanity wants to be blessed. That is no surprise. What they seek is relief from fear and guilt. Why do we think they take drugs? It is to escape the hounding voice of the Holy Spirit telling them they need to reconcile with a holy God. But they would prefer relief to regeneration. What they seek is comfort and peace in their sin.

This is why unless the Holy Spirit is actively present when fallen men and women encounter the holiness of God there response is terror. It is terror. What was Isaiah’s response? “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty” sang the seraphim as they flew about the throne and Isaiah said, “Oh, no, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Woe is me!” And he was devastated until the angel came with a burning ember and burned his lips and said, “Now you are pure.”

So when people meet God without benefit of faith in Christ, when they hear the voice of righteousness they hate it. When they meet the people of God they become scornful, dismissive, angry, condescending, whatever. But they will put up one form of an emotional barrier against any consideration of you as someone who holds them in tender regards and desires the well-being; that cannot be! For they will intuitively understand that if they come closer to one who has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit of God they will have to deal with the reality of their sin, and that is not acceptable. So don’t go anyplace without filling yourself up with the Holy Spirit of God to ensure that the Spirit of God goes before you, not only that He empowers you, so that the gate is open, not closed against you, so that the Spirit of God can speak directly to the heart and by the grace of God bring conviction and faith.

But Israel has rejected the Spirit of God. Now we come down to verses 13 and following. Notice what Amos says, *“Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time.”* Beloved, this is exactly the time that we lie in. In our day the light is fading and it has become increasingly risky and rarely effective to speak of righteousness and truth, to speak against the lies of the world and expose the hearts of the lost; we know that. They love their sins, or perhaps loving themselves they choose to not leave their sins. But now I want to share with you something. Every year God blesses me in a variety of ways. You can imagine how I have felt [in working through Amos.] Amos is not my favorite book! It just is so miserable, and if it wasn’t so true [to our day]... But listen to this. This is a book written by Michael Craven with a forward by Josh McDowell. He is a man who began to develop a ministry to homosexuals. He along with someone else was invited to a conference in that center of enlightenment called the University of California at Berkeley. Listen carefully. He spoke briefly and the man followed him spoke and went directly to Romans I, right. Let those rotten sinners have it double barrel! [Mr. Craven] sat there agonizing. “Lord, where is anybody going to see Your love in this? When will this end? It ended of course, and now I will pick up the narrative from the book.

“Of course, it did end. As I was gathering up my things and preparing to leave the stage – By the way, you know how the crowd behaved, yelling and screaming and doing all kinds of obscene things: how would we respond? – I noticed a large crowd of students pressing toward me. Somewhat unsure of their motives at this point, I was greeted by the first student, a female. This young woman had virtually everything on her face pierced, and her T-shirt clearly proclaimed her sexual orientation, which was *not* heterosexual. However, much to my surprise she thrust out her hand and said, ‘Mr. Craven I want to thank you for coming. I didn’t agree with everything you said, but you made some good points, and I really appreciated *the way* you spoke, unlike this @#*&! here,’ referring uncharitably to my partner. Not surprisingly, he quickly left the auditorium. This same pattern was repeated as student after student came forward to express thanks. Then a young woman came forward saying she was a Christian who had been living in a same-sex relationship for more than three years. [Now think about that: what kind of agony and internal strife must she have been going through?] She said, ‘I don’t understand how something that feels so right to me could be wrong in the sight of God,’ and she began to weep. My heart broke for this young woman who was so obviously conflicted. Without going into great detail, I began to gently explain the biblical admonitions against her lifestyle while sympathizing with the reality of her attractions; I likened these to the sexual attraction felt by heterosexuals outside the context of a biblically prescribed relationship. I explained that acting upon these attractions outside the biblical prescription is an act of disobedience against God. At this point, I realized that I had reached across the podium and taken this young woman’s hand as she wept. This moment was, for me, frozen as I looked up to observe the entire group of fifty to sixty students captivated by this exchange. It was as if the Lord said to me, *This is what I want them to see—that I love them and died for them.*’ (emphasis in the original)

Do not ever despair of the grace of God, for the grace of God will take us places we wouldn’t dream of going, because He loves people we can hardly abide! And isn’t a good thing He loved us!

But Amos tells us how the Israelites carried on in his day. In verse 11 he tells us, *“Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone...you have planted pleasant vineyards...”* and the rest. The problem that they face is that the ruling elite loved their sins because they brought wealth to them, and wealth and power are sweet, they are candy for the soul. In v. 12 Amos tells us those in the right places took bribes from one another rather than caring for those who needed their protection. In our

day, if you follow the news and you can stomach what you follow, there are those who buy special arrangement from the government through kick-backs and political contributions. We are told to follow the money. Why? It is because money is what makes the system purr, of course.

But consider how impossible and how ironic what Amos has to say in verses 14 and 15 are. He says to these people who are feeding off of their sin, benefitting from their sin, enjoying comforts and conveniences and high status through their sinful behavior and he says to them, *“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. 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.”* But the problem is that evil is the hand that feeds them, and goodness and justice are the voices that condemn them. So how can they do it? They cannot, and God knows that they cannot for He knows that they will not. One of the commentators said, “It was a time of moral corruption, in which all speaking and warning are to no avail.” (p. 284, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vo.. 10, Minor Prophets, by Keil and Delitzsch.)

Amos in v. 16 sounds the consequence: *“Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord: ‘In all the squares there shall be wailing, and in the streets they shall say, “Alas! Alas!” They shall call the farmers to mourning and to wailing those who are skilled in lamentation, and in all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through your midst,’ says the Lord.”* The Israelites were fond of saying, “O that the day of the Lord would come! O that the day of the Lord would come!” That was the day that knew the Lord would come and wipe out all their enemies and make them even more comfortable and wealthy than they were. But what will happen when the Lord comes? When the Lord comes to the unrepentant sinner judgment is inescapable. There is no way out. When the Lord comes to the unrepentant it is an absolute waste of time to try and worship Him. In verses 18-19 [Amos declares], *“Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him.”* God has no interest in the worship of the unrepentant heart. So if you are here today and you have not yet made up your mind to come into submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and you are saying “But I still have some time, I want to think about this a little longer, I want to pray about this a bit more, I am not quite ready,” just be warned, listen to what Amos has to say. If you wait too long the Lord will come, and when He comes you are done; it is over. Because the graces of God are not the entirety of who He is. He is the God of Justice, the God of Holiness and He will act according to His holiness and righteousness and justice, for He must. That is exactly what Amos is trying to have the Israelites understand. In verses 21 through 23 Amos declares, *I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings an grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.”* And even if it is in the Oroville Evangelical Free Church and you are sitting the midst of a bunch of believers do not think that the Lord God is incapable of knowing who you are, where you, what you have done because you continue to say, “Not now! Later!” And God says, “You had better act.”

We should not think or say to ourselves that God is different today. God does not change. He tells us what He wants and He tells us what He looks for when we enter the assembly of the righteous, the congregation which has gathered to praise the Lord and thank Him. What does he want? Beloved, as I read Amos He doesn’t want to know how many times you shared Jesus last week. What He wants to know is, have you paid attention to justice, and

righteousness. How many times have I heard people in this congregation and outside this congregation talk about their dismay at the quality of life and government in Oroville? The question is, do you [really] care? Because if we do not, then God can ask us, “Where is the justice, who stood up for righteousness; who is working to establish the kingdom of My presence in this town? I did not die just to have a group of fat churches; I died for the city, that it would come to know the justice and truth and righteousness as well as the compassions of God. I am talking to My people: where are you in seeking the well-being of the community in which you live: Jeremiah 29.

Increasingly the laws of our land and the courts have turned so far away from the principles of righteousness and the encouragement of goodness and the restraint of evil that it can be said of our nation that you call evil good and good evil. The life of the nation is increasingly choked with masses of statutes and regulations on every level. How many of you are builders? How often do you break the rules? Constantly! Why? Because it is almost impossible to function: so many regulations on every level so that any concept of justice or equity is lost in the bewildering complexities of lawyers and courts and the ever multiplying levels of bureaucracies and regulatory agencies. How many tried to sign up for Obamacare? Do not laugh; it is not funny. I laughed, but I realized it is a tragedy, because now you are entangled in an incomprehensible mass of rules and regulations and you do not know what to do, turning to the right or to the left. Therefore you not know what to do, what is righteous or true or just or right. That is what happens when a government falls into the kind of corruption and confusion that it is presently in. Once upon a time a long time ago I went to Russia on a mission. I was traveling at night getting out of the city of Moscow. We weren’t escaping but we were avoiding. I asked them about that, and the man who was hosting us said, “O, you have to understand: in Russia there are so many laws that all times you have broken some of them. Therefore they can arrest you whenever they want.” Are we there, beloved? Are we there?

Perhaps we need to consider once again the situation of the early church in the first age of the church when law and justice as it was practiced by the Roman Empire had as its first concern the continuance of the power and wealth of the Empire which was preserved by force of arms, violence imposed to intimidate and was funded by taxes forcibly extracted and augmented by graft and bribes. That is the world that the church was born into. Can we live the way they did? Yes! Why? Same Spirit; the same Holy Spirit is in us as was in them. Let us not be afraid. What could a marginalized people do, those Christians who were despised as much by the Jewish establishment as by the Roman ruling class and the Greek cultural elite? Let us never forget this last comment. Do we not realize that to have honorable rulers who understand their first duty is to serve the public by restraining evil, indeed who understand they need to know what is evil and what is good and favor the latter over their personal advantage and restrain the former even at personal cost: that to have such rulers is a dearly bought privilege? You and I have absolutely no right to assume that God will continue to bless this nation or us to enjoy us to enjoy the freedoms and the prosperity that are ours if we continue to let the system drift into deeper and deeper corruption and the loss of any knowledge of God, [for] then the actions by that government will be increasingly against the body of Christ until, if it can, it will destroy it. But you and I are indwelt by the Spirit of the Living God, and we can stand to the end.

Please pray with me: Heavenly Father, it is just simply not a time for us to assume that business is as normal. For Father the fact of the matter is that it hasn’t been normal in quite a while. Our intent, Father is not to condemn any one particular person, but rather to let the light of Your truth shine upon the Body of Christ and us in particular, and to ask Father in heaven, may your Spirit work in a new way in us to reshape the desires of our hearts, the

dreams of our minds, the longings by which we live, that we might live for You and the glory of Your name and for the good of our neighbors. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. What great losses have you experienced in life and have any of these been what seemed to be the loss of spiritual opportunity, perhaps even the opportunity for salvation?
2. What are some of the ways people have of not listening or responding to God’s pleas that they hear His words and return to fellowship with Him?
3. The problem with Israel’s worship was a kind of “selective” hearing and response to God’s calling. Do American Christians tend to have blind and deaf spots relative to God’s Word?
4. “Worship has to reflect who we are and what we do in life.” Comments?
5. Do you think Isaiah’s complaint is applicable to us (Isaiah 1:12-17)?
6. In what ways and why might people who attend churches put pressure on the “prophets” to not actually preach the word?
7. If in fact unsaved people are “seekers” what are they most likely to be seeking? Why is it unlikely they are actually seeking God? (see slides 13 and 14 also)
8. Can you understand or sympathize in any way with the difficulties the ruling elite in Israel faced in responding to God’s calling them to return to Him?
9. How do you see Amos’ teaching about “the day of the Lord (v. 18) relative to the New Testament teaching on the second coming of Jesus? (see on this I Thessalonians 5:1-6 and Hebrews 9:27-28)
10. In the absence of political power (the power to make laws and establish government policies) how can Christian individuals and churches respond to Amos 5:24?