

Asleep In The Light

“You deserve a break today,” is the familiar slogan of McDonald’s. It has a certain ring to it, doesn’t it! It has a certain allure that catches our attention. I do deserve a break today. With the pressures of our school, work and family, with our hectic busy schedules sometimes we feel like “Yes, I do deserve a break today.”

In fact the Bible says in Matthew 11:28 **Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

In Psalm 25:13 it says: **His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.**

The weeping prophet had this to say in Jeremiah 46, “and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid...for I am with thee”

As believers we are promised a time of rest. We are promised that Jesus Christ will be the peace of our lives. In times of struggle we can go to the rock that is higher than I and find a place of refuge. Indeed rest and peace are marks of the Christian life. These are distinctives which set us apart from the rest of the world. In the world you can find no rest.

Deuteronomy 28:65 - And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest:

- The Bible says the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
- But in Jesus Christ you can find rest and comfort and peace.
- Let’s praise him for the rest and peace we can have in him.

There is another sense in which the word rest can be used. It is a carnal rest or a fleshly rest. I am talking:

- Not about confidence in Christ, but about a hardening of the heart, a callousness to the things of God.
- Not about the security of one who is on the rock, but about the abandon of one whose house is on the sand.
- Not about the peace of God which comes with the knowledge that you are being used of God, but about growing lazy and apathetic to the cries of a hungry world.

The message of the book of Amos speaks to the people of God concerning the danger of growing apathetic in our walk with God.

The message of Amos was to the people of God and not to the heathen. Because the best thing that God can do for the heathen is to get the people of God right. And when the people of God get right we will be revived. And when revival breaks out in the Church among the people of God, then we will begin to reach the world and change the world.

The prophet Amos was the son of a humble herdsman from Tekoa. He probably did not have the finest of education. But with what he did have he preached an awesome message in the book that bears his name. He prophesied in a time when The Jews were divided. In the northern kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam was the king and in the southern kingdom of Judah, Uzziah was the king.

Amos preached with a message that burned within his heart. Amos had heard from the Lord. He said "the Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem" He said (Amos 3:8)

"The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

And prophesy he did. He preached a masterpiece sermon. He is prophesying to Israel the northern kingdom, but he does not start with them. First he starts with the nations round about and slowly brings it

closer home. He pronounces the judgment of God upon the sins of the nations.

Amos 1:3 - Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron

Amen Amos preach it!

Amos 1:6 - Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:

Amos 1:9 - Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

Amos 1:11 - Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:

Amos 1:13 - Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

Amos 2:1 - Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

Amos 2:4 - Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah,

and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

Amos 2:6 - *Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;*

Wait a minute Amos, that's us! You've quit preaching and gone to meddling. But God had a message for the northern kingdom of Israel. After he had dealt with the sins of all the nations around them he pointed his finger right where he wanted it to begin with - Israel. God had a word for Israel from this prophet. And God has a word for every one of us today. From myself on down to the back of the church - God has a word for us today.

The message is "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria".

The first problem the people of God faced was the problem of trusting in a false security.

During this time it was a season of great prosperity. Under King Jeroboam, Israel:

- Had gained control of the international trade routes - the king's highway
- And had restored their borders.
- They became complacent because of their wealth and exalted position.
- They considered themselves to be the chief nation.
- And were secure in their position.
- They compared themselves to nations around them.

***Amos 6:2** - Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?*

They felt secure in their own religion. They were trusting in their own security. God wouldn't be blessing us if we were doing wrong would he? We are the people of God aren't we?

Surely if we attend church now and again we will be all right, won't we? Trusting in the outward adornments of religion is never enough.

➤ ***Jeremiah 7:1** - The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 - Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.*

3 - Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

4 - Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.

- Trust not in lying words "I go to church", because it's more than just going to church. You need to have a relationship with God!
- Don't trust in the outward symbols of religion because that is a false security. Just coming to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage will make you a car. Beware if your trusting in religion and not relationship, because God has called us to take up our cross and follow him.
- It's so easy to take God for granted and to put other things before him. Don't mistake his patience for his approval. Some people think just because God hasn't judged them it's alright. What you are experiencing is not approval but mercy.
- Don't become complacent in Zion.

***Verse 3** - you put off the day of evil or doom. It will never come. They persisted on in their wicked ways upon a presumption that they would never be called into account for them.*

Don't be lulled to sleep. There is a judgement.

***Amos 6:4** - That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;*

5 - That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David;

6 - That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

- Beds inlaid with ivory
- Luxury abounded
- Best food
- Chant to the viol
- Invent ways to be entertained
- Drink from bowls because it seemed they could never get enough from a cup best perfume

And then Amos brings it all home when he says "but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph". They had no concerns for the interests of the church of God. Happiness and pleasure was more important to them than what was going on at the church. What it means to be at ease and complacent is that we really don't care.

We have heard the word of God. We have heard the commands of Christ. But we fail to take them seriously. We have been lulled to sleep. We are asleep in the light. The world is lost in darkness while the church is asleep in the light.

The real issue was their hearts were out of sync with God's heart. While God's heart was broken they were more interested in satisfying their desires.

Let me ask everyone here today a pointed question - Does what grieves the heart of Jesus grieve our heart? What grieves his heart is lost souls. Is our heart in sync with God.

An artist seeking to depict on canvas the meaning of evangelism, painted a storm at sea. Black clouds filled the sky. Illuminated by a flash of lightning, a little boat could be seen disintegrating under the pounding of the ocean. Men were struggling in the swirling waters, their anguished faces crying out for help. The only glimmer of hope appeared in the foreground of the painting, where a large rock protruded out of the water. There, clutching desperately with both hands was one lone man.

It was a moving scene. Looking at the painting, one could see in the tempest a symbol of mankind's hopeless condition. And, true to the gospel, the only hope of salvation was the "Rock of Ages", a shelter in the time of storm.

But as the artist reflected upon his work, he realized that the painting did not accurately portray his subject. So he discarded the canvas, and painted another. It was very similar to the first: the black clouds, the flashing lightning, the angry waters, the little boat crushed by the pounding waves, and the crew vainly struggling in the water. In the foreground the man was clutching the large rock for salvation. But the artist made one change: the man was holding on with only one hand, and with the other hand he was reaching down to pull up a drowning friend.

This is the call to every believer - to awake out of sleep and shake the slumber off and reach out your hand to pull someone to safety.

The world is lost in darkness but we the church must not be asleep in the light.