

Twenty-Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

November 12, 2023

There Will Be Peace Forever!

Amos 5:18-24

Amos delivers a surprisingly odious prophecy to the nations of Judah and Israel, who in the 8th century were in relative prosperity. And because prosperity can inspire immorality, the people of God, while rich in worldly values were spiritually impoverished. Vice, idolatry and false sanctity had become the fashion of the rich and famous. Parties were reveled in, ladders of social notoriety were to be climbed, and worship...was empty... ritualistic...and performative.

They treated their spiritual care just like they were attending a dance with a dance card in hand to be punched. They thought if they just made the right moves and picked the right partners; God would come along and punch their card and crown them the kings and queens of their deceptive dance.

Amos comes today, with the Words of Yahweh, and ruins it all, prophesying their temporal ruin at the hands of the hated Assyrians but saving them from eternal ruin at the same time!

There is a saying my family likes to use when irritated with the one person that slows the rest of us down, and that is, "There's always one!"

Like when you came up with that perfect impromptu game as a kid. Then someone came along and suggested that throwing dirt clods at each other might put your eye out, or jumping on the bed might get you a broken neck or throwing water at each other from the kitchen sink might ruin the hard wood floors in the house! The Debbie-downer was always the one who ruined it for everyone and then you couldn't have any more fun!

I still remember a cool summer evening in Bloomington Minnesota as a little boy. There was a new kid in the neighborhood who had a skill none of us had ever seen before. He could lasso with a rope! Now, after he demonstrated his skill with a stationary saw horse, it didn't take long for us to ask, "Hey, do you think you could lasso me?"

And catch it all if he couldn't lasso us at a dead run twenty feet away! It wasn't long before an amazing new game "lasso your friend" was afoot! Now do you know what happens when a twisting and spinning hemp rope comes in contact with tender little boy's skin? You guessed it...rope burns! We all got one, but my best friend Billy got the worst of it. If he had just not

gone home that night, and if he had just managed to avoid his mom that night, well the night may have ended differently for us all.

As it was, when I went over to his house later that evening, from over a block away I could hear howls of pain as Billy's mom was applying the antiseptic that really stings to his massive rope burn on his neck. Needless to say, we never got to play the lasso game ever again.

Well, poor Billy got blamed for ruining a perfectly good game of "lasso your friends" and when it was said, "there's always one that ruins it for all", we all knew Billy was who they meant.

Amos is the one who ruins it for all, and I say thanks be to God, lest all of us would have met our eternal ruin indeed!

The fun the people of God were having was leading to burns from Satan lassoing them into sin again and again and again. Satan had convinced them to walk like zombies through routine sacrificial acts that did nothing more than punch a perfunctory card with no faith in their hearts at all. They didn't believe what they were saying, they didn't love the Lord that saved them from slavery in Egypt and they didn't want to worship Him in His temple that He Built for them.

Rather, they longed for the bare minimum satisfactory worship so they could get back to what mattered most to them: living in the lap of luxury far from the safety of God's Spiritual direction and counsel. They wanted a different God that differed little from their desire to be dedicated only to themselves. So God sent Amos to warn the people of God that the lasso they were playing with was nothing more than a noose ready to snap their spiritual necks.

In my previous parish I had a member that was a do-it-yourself kind of guy long before DIY was popular on HGTV. One time he was outside trimming a really tall tree with a rope cinched around his waist and the other end attached to a tree limb higher up. If he lost his footing, he would be saved from falling to the ground by his improvised safety belt.

As he was working, his wife came out of the house and called up to him in the tree,

"Jay, why are you wearing that rope *around* your waist?"

He replied, "Well honey, it's keeping me from falling to my death!"

"Well take it off!" She demanded.

"Now, why on earth would I want to do that?" he exclaimed.

“Because,” she said, “if the rope slips and ends up around your neck, they’ll think you committed suicide and I won’t get any life insurance!!”

Today, Amos sits at the roots of the tree of Judah and Israel and makes it clear that they cannot keep themselves safe. Amos wants to insure that they don’t run too far from the safe confines of Yahweh’s caring arms.

We should all be concerned with going through the motions and tempted by time without God. Eternity is a long time to live without our Savior and I think we can all agree, none of us wants to dance with that devil!

Amos comes at the end of the church year to help us focus. So this year make sure you keep enough time for your Savior Jesus who draws you to Himself by the working of the Holy Spirit.

Immerse yourselves in the Advent season with the presence of God that was won for you by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for all your sins, and have joy in the knowledge that He never wants to leave you or forsake you. Make plans to get that extra devotion book, attend that extra midweek worship, and join us for amazing food, friends and fellowship in Christ.

In this season of the coming of the Prince of Peace, be at peace in your hearts with peace. Like the closing hymn we’ll sing today, says, it flows like a river to you and from you to everyone you know.

We will pray together that our sinful side is ruined everyday by the blood of Christ, and that the devil is destroyed and God’s Justice is achieved. Then there will be peace forever.
AMEN.

Rev. Marc A. Kappel, M.Div.
Senior Pastor
Faith Lutheran Church Eustis, Florida