

## I. Introduction

- A. Who's ready for good news today? Let's get right into the Bible.
- B. I'm going to ask you to open your Bible to a little book that you may have never looked at before. It's in the first part of the Bible, which is called the Old Testament. It is the book of Amos.
- C. If you can find Isaiah, just keep going a little bit and you'll find him. For the next few weeks, I'd like us to apply our hearts and minds to the voice of God to us as recorded in this book of Amos. It starts this way:
  1. *"This message was given to Amos, a shepherd from the town of Tekoa in Judah. He received this message in visions two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, was king of Israel. This is what he saw and heard: "The LORD's voice will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem! The lush pastures of the shepherds will dry up; the grass on Mount Carmel will wither and die.""* (Amos 1:1-2, NLT)
- D. A lot of words. A lot of strange words. We're going to have to dig a little bit. But let me start with a story.

## II. Maverick

- A. There are 50 states in the United States. The second biggest is Texas, which joined the United States in 1845.
- B. One of the most powerful and influential leaders at that time was a politician, a landowner, and a judge. At the time of his death he owned 385,000 acres of land. He'd become one of the signers of the Texas declaration of independence from Mexico. He was known as a visionary who shaped the history and culture of Texas. He was known for fearlessness. He was known for standing out from the crowd.
- C. There was a time when a friend who owed him money couldn't pay. So instead of money, the friend gave him 400 head of cattle.
- D. Now, this politician and judge also becomes a rancher. He was the only rancher who didn't brand his cattle. He would let them roam free. None of the other ranchers did it this way.
- E. This man was always going his own way, even if it meant bucking the trends. Eventually, his name became synonymous with a person who is independently minded. This man who would not let anybody squeeze him into their mould—I'm sure you've heard his name.
- F. His name was Samuel Augustus Maverick.
- G. He is the original maverick.
- H. I am so glad you are here. You are here for part one of a new series on the book of Amos. I'm calling it...

### 1. A Maverick Spirit

- I. The heroes of history were mavericks. They went out on a limb. They did what nobody else would do. Because they believed what nobody else believed.
  1. It was a maverick named **Anne Frank** who saved Jewish children from the Nazi Holocaust.
  2. It was a maverick named **David Livingstone** who walked the continent of Africa 4 times on foot to fight the slave trade, and to bring the gospel.
  3. It was a maverick named **Amy Carmichael** who fought child sex trafficking in India, and saved little boys and girls from temple prostitution.
  4. It was a pair of mavericks named **William and Catherine Booth** who wanted to help outcasts who are not welcome in traditional churches. So they reached out to thieves, prostitutes, addicts, street people, and the poor. They said, "hungry bellies, have no ears," so they fed them before they taught them the gospel. And so was born the worldwide mission that today is called the Salvation Army.
  5. It was a maverick named **Sojourner Truth**. Born into slavery, she heard the gospel, "embraced God's righteousness," and got saved. She said, "From that day I made up my mind that Christ should have my whole heart." She escaped slavery with her infant son and in 1828 won the first legal case to declare her son free from slavery. She became a preacher, preaching to thousands in both the gospel and the evils of slavery. She met with Abraham Lincoln and influenced him to abolish slavery. She recruited troops for the Civil War. She established a transitional shelter for people exiting slavery. She was a living inspiration for the ideals of liberty and justice for all.
- J. They saw the way things were, and they said things are not as they ought to be.
- K. That's how it is. The world is broken. The devil is still on the prowl. His lies swirl around us all the time. And when the way things are is hypnotized and bewitched by the devil, it takes holy rebels to shatter the illusion, and set the captives free.
- L. When the world cancels the gospel it takes a maverick to say, the gospel is still the power of God, and there is no shut down, lockdown, or clamping down that will silence his voice.
  1. When evil makes demands on you, being a rebel is the only option for the child of God.

2. When Satan roars, resistance is a holy and noble thing.
- M. There is a quote that a lot of people say came from George Orwell, but nobody can actually find where he wrote that. It's still a great quote: "In a time of universal deceit, speaking the truth is an act of revolution."
- N. When Peter and other apostles were proclaiming the way of salvation and healing people in the name of Jesus, the authorities got angry. They commanded the apostles to stop and threatened them with prison. Cancel culture was alive and well back then.
  1. "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" (Acts 5:29)
- O. When the king commanded all the rulers of the world to bow to his idol and worship him—or be thrown into a fiery furnace—three true believers would not bow. All around them, thousands and thousands kissed the dust. But these three stood tall. They said, "O King, we will not bow."
- P. They did what nobody else would do, because they believed what nobody else believed.
  1. They believed they were Royal children of a great king.
  2. They believed they were strangers and pilgrims on the Earth.
  3. They believed they had a true home in heaven, and their Father would bring them there.
  4. They believed that dying for God was better than living for the world.
  5. And they believed that any cost was worth it to give testimony to a God who saves through his Son who walks with them in the fire.
- Q. They were Maverick spirits who did what nobody else would do because they believed what nobody else believed.

### III. Cultural Mess

- A. Here comes Amos riding into town. He rides down from a fortress-town in the hills of Judah to one of the great cities of Israel. He comes to a city only about 25 miles from his home. The city is called Bethel.
- B. This happens eight centuries before Christ. At that time, Bethel was wealthy, crowded, and corrupt.
- C. It was morally evil and religiously upside down.
- D. He rides into a town that looks beautiful. But if you look beneath the surface—which is what a prophet does—you see the darkness there. You see the demonic lies there.
- E. The physical setting is not the deepest setting.
- F. The real way of looking at things is spiritual. If we had eyes to see the spiritual condition of a place, what we see would tell a different story. This is what Amos saw, and this is the highly polished, wonderfully sophisticated, widely accepted, demonically-inspired evil he came to punch in the face.

### G. Five Corruptions

1. **Hypocrisy (Amos 5:21-24).** The people were going through all of the outward forms of religion, but their hearts were far from God. They were hypocrites. Amos is going to call them out on this. Don't say that you're God's people and then put your opinions on how life should go above God's Word. Hypocrites.
2. **Elitism (Amos 2:6-8 and 5:11,12).** If God lets you have money or power or authority or influence, that's a huge blessing, and God wants you to enjoy it. But another purpose is to bless people and to serve people, and to help make the world a better place by pointing people to Jesus. But that's not what was happening. In the days of Amos, the people in power were taking advantage of their power to bully and exploit and oppress.
  - a) God said that every generation had to release all the slaves. They weren't doing that.
  - b) God said that every generation had to give the land back to its ancestral owners. They weren't doing that either.
  - c) The high and mighty saw the little people as serfs and themselves as self-appointed overlords.
  - d) Amos preaches, "Hello, Ladies and Gentlemen. Soon, God will make you choke on your own riches. Have a nice day."
3. **Perversion (Amos 5:14,15,24).** The people were immoral. They had their own sexual revolution, and it crossed every boundary God created. They thought they could spit on the moral laws of God and it wouldn't make a difference.
  - a) Amos is going to tell them that no one can break God's laws; you can only break yourself against God's laws.
  - b) As believers in Jesus, we have a moral code that makes us different. In fact, every year it makes us more different. It doesn't make us superior. It makes us different, and if you're walking with the Lord, that is going to show.
  - c) Immorality is unreality. And unreality breaks your heart and damages your mind.
  - d) Amos is going to say there is good news here, but there is not only spiritual redemption for God's people, there's sexual redemption too. Return to him, and he will return to you.

4. **Overconfidence (Amos 3:11, 6:1).** The people suffered from bloated self-confidence. We are strong. We're rich. We are good. No worries. We don't need God. We've got it figured out. They're going to learn the hard way that when you ignore God's word, you're sowing a harvest of difficulty and pain. And one day the harvest will be ready. On that day, you will reap what you sow.
  - a) The devil has had thousands of years of tricking people. He is the master of it.
  - b) But we haven't learned our lesson yet. It would seem to me that if you see how your father failed, your mother failed, your grandparents failed, your friends failed, and your Uncle Ding-Dong, failed, and you see other people fall and fail, and get tricked and wreck their lives, you ought to be smart enough to say, I'm not gonna do what they did!
  - c) But unfortunately, we somehow think that we can break the rules of God's universe and it doesn't apply to us. I can do the same things they did, and the same consequences won't happen to me.
  - d) The devil says, That's okay. The Good Lord understands. Give it a try.
  - e) If I jump off the top of this building, I could be saved, sanctified, Holy Ghost filled, speaking in tongues on my way down, with my hands raised and worshiping God, but when I hit the ground, there are going to be some consequences.
  - f) When Satan sits down to watch TV, his favorite sitcom is watching you and me with bloated confidence in the things we just know are true even though they go against the Bible.
5. **Idolatry (Amos 5:5,6, 7:9, 8:14).** God said they should have no other gods before him. But here they were worshiping idols. The worship of idols, especially the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, was everywhere.
  - a) One problem with idols is that there's a demon hiding behind every idol (Deuteronomy 32:17, 1 Corinthians 10:21). Idol worship literally invites demons to harass you.
  - b) Another problem is when you worship a false God you always develop a false identity. It's how the devil messes with you.
  - c) When Amos calls the people back from idols, he's only calling them back to true reality, real sanity, and their actual identity.

H. Like I said, the culture was a moral and spiritual mess. Hypocrisy. Elitism. Perversion. Immorality. Bloated self-confidence. Idolatry.

I. Does any of this ring any bells at all? Does this sound familiar?

#### IV. Sin Hurts

- A. Amos is preaching a message against sin. Not popular, but it has to happen.
- B. Amos is preaching his message against sin because God loves people and Amos loves people and we love people and sin hurts.
- C. **You will never be able to separate your moral corruptions from your psychological health.**
  1. Don't misunderstand me. And please don't misrepresent me. I am not saying that if you have psychological problems it's because you're immoral. No. It doesn't work that direction. There are many many different causes for psychological problems, and a lot of them aren't your fault.
  2. But one of the causes that you are responsible for is your own moral choices.
- D. If you are immoral, you're going to have psychological problems.
  1. That's what I'm saying. Anxiety. Low self-esteem. Narcissism. Shame. Depression. Addiction. Dysfunction. Loneliness. Guilt. Despair.
    - a) You're going to have broken relationships.
    - b) You're going to have shallow relationships.
    - c) Your marriage will suffer.
    - d) Your dating will suffer.
    - e) Your career will suffer.
    - f) Your children will suffer too.
    - g) You will suffer.
- E. You are created in the image of God. God is righteous, and God is true. And when you live in unrighteousness, and when you live in untruth, that breaks you emotionally, because your moral life and your mental health go together. Consequences.
- F. I've seen it a thousand times and I'll bet you have too.
- G. And that means:

**1. When somebody does the very difficult thing of warning you, even though it's unpopular, that is an act of love.**

H. So here comes Amos.

V. Amos

- A. I picture Amos, riding into town, tying his horse at the edge of the bustling marketplace, wiping off the dust of the trail, stepping up onto a box, and raising his voice to preach. He says:
  - 1. *"The LORD's voice will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem! The lush pastures of the shepherds will dry up; the grass on Mount Carmel will wither and die."* (Amos 1:2)
- B. It's a message of judgment, and of the wrath of God. Agriculture will die. When agriculture dies, the economy dies. When all that dies, everybody dies.
- C. So he is preaching bad news. In fact, this morning, I read the whole book of Amos again. It's almost all bad news. What should we do with this? If we believe the Bible, what should we do with this? Should we skip it? Should we ignore it? Should we do some theological magic tricks, and say that it's irrelevant?
- D. No. I believe with all my heart that this is the truth. And I have an obligation to teach it to you. Yes I want to preach grace. Yes I want good news. But Grace isn't Grace, unless it is set against the frightful backdrop of the blistering holiness of God.
- E. So here comes Amos with his very difficult message. He's preaching at the top of his lungs.
- F. A crowd begins to gather. They listen for a while, and begin to wonder.
  - 1. A man in the crowd calls out, "Tells us, preacher, what's your name?"
  - 2. Someone else calls, "Yeah, and where are you from?"
- G. He announces, "My name is Amos and I come from Tekoa."
  - 1. A woman standing with her servants says, "Tekoa? Aren't you in the wrong place? Sir, this is Israel. Our king is Jeroboam II. Go back to your own nation, preacher. Trot on back to Judah and preach to your own king. Go preach the wrath of God to old King Uzziah!"
  - 2. The people laugh and cheer.
- H. Amos lifts his voice above the heckling crowd. "Tell me all you like that I don't belong here. But it was God himself who sent me to you. I have a warning from him. If you stay in rebellion against your God, this nation will collapse and be destroyed, and not even the king will be spared."
- I. The crowd grows larger. By now the religious rulers have arrived. One of the priests challenges Amos. "Who made you a preacher? Where did you go to school? Who gave you your credentials?"
  - 1. Amos says, "Actually, I am a rancher and a shepherd and a farmer. No, I didn't go to the school of the prophets. I don't have a degree in theology. In fact, I don't have any credentials at all. But.... God sent me. And all my life, I've studied the Word of God. All my life I've studied Moses. Since I was a child, I've gone and listened to the prophets preach. I've studied the teachings of Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea. No, neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet. But it was the Lord himself who called me away from my flock, and told me to go and prophesy to his people in Israel... He wants me to tell you he says this to you:
    - a) *"I hate all your show and pretense—the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings. I won't even notice all your choice peace offerings. Away with your noisy hymns of praise! I will not listen to the music of your harps. Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of true righteousness."* (Amos 5:21-24)
- J. This is a Amos. His message is not popular. It is not welcome. It is not good news, not at first.
- K. Amos doesn't fit anybody's expectations of what a prophet should look like.
  - 1. He is a preacher without ordination.
  - 2. He is a teacher without credentials.
  - 3. He is an ambassador without papers.
  - 4. He is a doctor without a license.
- L. But he has the call of God on his life, don't you know that that's enough. He is a maverick spirit, because that's what it takes to shake a society out of its deadly complacency.
- M. May God multiply his tribe.

VI. What about YOU?

- A. What about you? Oh, I am a nobody you say. Nobody will listen to me. I don't have the right credentials.
- B. Let me tell you, if you have Jesus Christ, you also have the Holy Spirit, and if you have any bit of the gospel, and any bit of the Word of God, you have all the credentials you need.

1. “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- C. There's your credentials. You are an ambassador for Christ.
  1. You are an ambassador for Christ in your classroom.
    - a) You are an ambassador before you are a teacher. You are this before you are a student. This is your identity. This is who you are. You're an ambassador. Everything else takes a backseat.
  2. You are an ambassador for Christ in your workplace.
  3. You are an ambassador for Christ in your business.
  4. You are an ambassador for Christ in your neighborhood.
  5. You are an ambassador for Christ in your city.
  6. You are an ambassador for Christ on your team.
  7. You are an ambassador for Christ in that political office.
  8. You are an ambassador for Christ with your fishing buddies, drinking buddies, golf buddies, neighborhood friends, dance partner and your enemies too.
  9. You are an ambassador for Christ in your crazy, broken, mixed up family.
- D. They need Jesus.
- E. So they need YOU to tell THEM of HIM.
  1. And you might be the most unlikely candidate in the world to do anything even close to that.
  2. That's what makes it better.
- F. If you fit too neatly into your peer group's mould, you're not doing your Christianity right.
  1. We need some Jesus freaks.
  2. We need some—and I'm quoting Peter in the Bible here—we need some “peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9 KJV).
  3. When the Church of England clamped down on the preaching of the Bible, thousands of pastors were ejected from their pulpits. They went and started new churches, illegal churches, and they were called Dissenters. I'm preaching today because we desperately need a generation of Dissenters.
    - a) I'm looking at you college students. I'm looking at you high school students. I'm looking at you.
  4. We need some non-conformist, unconventional, Jesus-loving, born again renegades.
  5. We need holy rebels against this soul-eating, heart-crushing, demon-infested society.
  6. We need the outliers, the outcasts, the ranchers, the farmers, the homemakers, the students, the stammerers, and those in recovery, and government officials, and high and low and rich and poor and preachers and pulpits and pews to shake off the shackles of silence and comfortable compliance, and to say — *the world is lying to you, the devil is devouring you, sin is killing you, hell is waiting for you... but God still loves you, and Jesus shed blood to save you, and he is calling to you right now , so won't you believe in him.*
- G. This is Amos. This is the maverick spirit I'm speaking about.

## VII. One Last Thing

- A. Amos rises up as one of the greatest prophets who ever lived and ever wrote. Some scholars think that with him, Hebrew prophetic literature reaches its pinnacle.
- B. He prophesies to Israel, Judah, Damascus, Syria, Edom, Ashdod, Philistia, and all around the known world.
- C. He said:
  1. “I will turn your celebrations into times of mourning and your singing into weeping. You will wear funeral clothes and shave your heads to show your sorrow—as if your only son had died. How very bitter that day will be!” (Amos 8:10)
- D. He spoke to Kings and princes and priests and academics. He spoke to the rich and wealthy. He spoke to the high and mighty. He spoke to the downtrodden and outcast. His message went everywhere and to everyone.
- E. Why?
- F. Because he wanted everyone everywhere to know that there is an authority greater than every other authority and a power supreme over every other power. This great God, this Lord, this Infinite Invisible Immortal Creator of the ends of the Earth, stands above all.
- G. He stands above them first in judgment, and then in grace... because Grace is only as glorious as the blistering wrath of God it rescues us from.
- H. Our God is a holy God.
  1. He is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29)
  2. He is a jealous God. (Exodus 20:5)
  3. He is the Judge of All the earth. (Genesis 18:25)

4. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. (Revelation 5:5)
5. Our God warns of a coming day of wrath. (Romans 2:5)
6. He pours out the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. (Revelation 16:19).
7. He treads the winepress of his great fury. (Revelation 19:15)
- I. Our God reveals...
  1. His burning anger. (Numbers 11:1)
  2. His indignation and wrath. (Romans 2:8)
  3. His thunderbolts and arrows (Psalm 18:14)
  4. His sword of justice (Revelation 19:15)
- J. And He declares, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay." (Romans 12:19)
- K. So it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31)
- L. I said I had good news today. Here it is. If you dig through all the layers of existence, when you peel back all the layers to the very core of the universe, you will discover an infinite, omnipotent, immortal, Creator Person with a never ceasing hatred of the forces that break your heart.
- M. You have a holy God.
- N. The truth of God is not a pick and choose buffet. He is who he is. He has revealed himself once and for all in Scripture, and with great finality in Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, ascended, and coming again.
- O. And when you know him and all his dimensions, especially those aspects that are so hard to look at, that's when saving grace shines with a dazzling glory, and that's when you will be willing to do the things nobody else would do because you believe the things nobody else believes.