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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
September 29, 2013
19th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons:; 1 Timothy 6:6-16; Luke 16:19-31
Hymns: 390; 430; 447; 413:6 (243:2,3,4)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Amos 6:1-7

Woe to you who are at ease in Zion,
And trust in Mount Samaria,
Notable persons in the chief nation,
To whom the house of Israel comes!
2 Go over to Calneh and see;
And from there go to Hamath the great;
Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
Are you better than these kingdoms?
Or is their territory greater than your territory?

3 Woe to you who put far off the day of doom,
Who cause the seat of violence to come near;
4 Who lie on beds of ivory,
Stretch out on your couches,
Eat lambs from the flock
And calves from the midst of the stall;
5 Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments,
And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David;
6 Who drink wine from bowls,
And anoint yourselves with the best ointments,
But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.
7 Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives,
And those who recline at banquets shall be removed. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Complacency

A shrug of the shoulders, all too often that says it all. The individual who is being confronted with a serious situation, with a difficult problem that is severely impacting others just doesn't care.

Maybe it's a teenager who is being confronted with some bad grades in school, but at that stage in life it doesn't seem all that important. There are a hundred other things that press upon the teen's consciousness as being more important than doing well in school. Indeed the teen's attitude may well be that all this stuff that is being taught in school doesn't really apply to life, at least not the way he sees life.

We know that such complacency will impact that individual's far more than this teen can appreciate at the moment. Even so, as huge a mistake as many others may see this to be, robbing his future of potential or options it once had, it doesn't begin to compare with the much more rampant complacency that is evident in our country, that is complacency in things spiritual.

This is hardly the first time that people failed to take God seriously, thinking that things will be just fine in spite of whatever God may say. Yes, the Scriptures abound with cases studies of people who have failed in this way. And so our text brings yet another wakeup call for people who should have known better, a message that still has application for people today: --

THEME: Woe to the Spiritually Complacent.

It all begins with

I. Complacency in Hearing the Word

The opening verses of our text show this to be true. The Word of the Lord is seen as being directed to others and not to the ones who are actually present to hear the Word. Amos was a prophet principally assigned to preach among the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Among the complaints which God had made clear against Israel was the abuse of the poor by the rich and privileged. The rich of Israel cared only for their own advancement. They would seek riches at all cost. In last Sunday's reading from Amos the rich were depicted as being eager for the Sabbath to be over, or the other religious festivals to end so that they could get back to business. They desired to be rich. They would do anything, even cheat and steal, if it meant they would acquire even more wealth. They were convinced they could get away with it. After all who could stand against them? Their wealth made them powerful, too powerful for the poor to oppose them. They had not pity. And so the Prophet Amos singled out the rich for this call to repentance. However, there is something that is a little unusual for Amos. The Lord had Amos include the privileged class in Jerusalem, in the southern Kingdom of Judah in this call for repentance.

This speaks to the first occasion for complacency that can appear in one's life, indeed even in our own lives. When we see sins being pointed out and the call for repentance being made we look around and see how well this applies to others, and their sins. We all do it, even in our day. We hear the Word of the Lord and we think of this person, that other individual who really should have been here to hear that particular message. We are quick to think of others, and slow to apply the Lord's warnings and call to repentance to ourselves. That is what Judah did all too often. They saw the idolatry of the northern kingdom, but failed to see that insincerity and duplicity of their own false worship and sinful lives. Here the Lord makes it clear that the privileged of Judah were seen as guilty of heartless greed as their brothers to the north.

The second fault in complacency in hearing the Word of the Lord is the idea that these things will happen but that won't happen to us. The people of Judah especially trusted that the Lord would never really go so far as the prophets declared. God told them to look at their neighbors, the neighbors north of Israel, neighbors to the south of Judah, neighbors who were actually grander and more

powerful than Judah and Israel. If they watched them, they would see the reality of the world powers coming down upon them in fulfillment of the Lord's judgments. They should see that if it could happen to them it could happen to Judah, it could happen to Israel.

But they were locked in complacency. They remained in denial. What was needed was repentance. Denial and shutting one's eyes both to the sinful nature of their covetous life style and the judgment that sin would bring would gain them nothing.

Repentance was their only hope. Repentance that recognized their evil of their heard hearts, and then turned away from sin and to the mercies of God. Only in the mercies of God could they find deliverance from the judgment to come.

So it remains for all people yet today. So many are complacent about their covetous ways of life. So many see others as being more wicked than themselves, so many are so sure that life will go on as it has that they need not worry about judgment from God. Repentance is the only deliverance from death, sin's sure consequence. It is when we look to the mercies of God that we see the salvation that He has provided in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Complacency is not found in Christ. He looked upon us in our fallen state and did what needed to be done to redeem us from sin and death. He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem where He would be taken by His enemies and suffer and die upon the cross. In His great love for us we have deliverance and life.

With such a great deliverance from certain death surely everyone would serve the Lord with steadfast zeal and faithfulness. But after a time complacency sets in yet again. We are prone to fall into --

II. Complacency in Our Creature Comforts.

That is what Amos was pointing out among the privileged class in Zion and Samaria, the capitals of Judah and Israel.

Amos 6:3-6 Woe to you who put far off the day of doom,
Who cause the seat of violence to come near;
4 Who lie on beds of ivory,
Stretch out on your couches,
Eat lambs from the flock
And calves from the midst of the stall;

5 Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments,
And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David;
6 Who drink wine from bowls,
And anoint yourselves with the best ointments,
But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

They were so comfortable in their lives of luxury that it wasn't possible for them to believe that this wonderful life could come to an end, that the riches that surrounded them wouldn't keep them safe and secure. They had their pastimes and their amusements. They were busy advancing culture and the arts. They were enjoying all the good things life has to offer. Surely this couldn't be bad?! Surely this couldn't just disappear!

Before one is too critical of them being so obtuse that they couldn't see what was coming, we should stop and look at our own lives. Maybe we aren't busy devising new musical instruments, maybe it would be better if we in America were engaged in that pastime instead of how inane our lives must appear to others in the world who struggle for daily bread. No, we sit in front of our flat screen TVs, or are busy surfing the net, checking up on our friends on Facebook, or trying to reach the next level on the newest and hottest edition of the Grand Theft Auto video game. We may indeed be absorbed in a favorite pastime with animals, or music, or sports. It doesn't matter which of these things prevail in our life when they become distractions from the spiritual aspects of life, it is just another form of complacency. What of the important things of hearing the Word, meditating upon the truth of God coming before the Lord with repentance and seeking His mercy in Christ? What of all this? We just don't have time. We're too busy.

God would wake us from this complacency. We are ignoring what's going on in the world. We are forgetting the impending judgment. Instead of hiding behind the laugh line of a late night comedian we need to get in touch with the Lord. We need the gospel for it is the way of deliverance, and not only for us, but all those around us as well. We need to shake ourselves out of complacency that comes with all the distractions that surround us in life so that we might lead others to recognize the need for repentance and life in Jesus' name. The gospel of Christ may not appear "high-tech" but it is not, nor shall it ever be outdated. It

remains the power of God unto salvation. It's His answer for the problems of life. We don't need all the distractions that only frost over the problem of sin and its heartache. We have the real thing in Christ crucified who took our guilt and condemnation upon Himself so that we might be at peace with God.

Amos warned of the end result from -

III. Complacency Over Judgment.

Amos 6:6-7 But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.
7 Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives,
And those who recline at banquets shall be removed.

The privileged of Israel and Judah “pooh-poohed” all that Amos had to say. It was as if they thought that if they didn't take him seriously they would never face these things. They made things worse with their complacency. Indeed the Lord made it clear that since they didn't care about the judgment that was to come upon all Israel, the Lord would make sure that the ruling class and the rich and privileged would be the first that the enemies would carry away. And so it was that the Assyrians took away the rich and influential first, and in the end only left the poorest of the people behind. And so it was also with Judah when Babylon rose up against Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar first took the princes and wisest of the young people to serve him in his court. Even though some among them were true to the Lord the nation suffered their loss because they had failed to truly listen to the warnings and the calls to repentance that were given time and again through the prophets.

Hear the Word of the Lord. Shake yourselves out of complacency! See your sin and repent! Turn to the Lord and search the Scriptures! They testify of Christ. They show us the path of life! They bring us to God, for God reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son. The breach that man made with his sin, a breach widened by the hardness of human hearts, is made whole by the wonderful workings of God in Christ. This is the best news! This gives us hope and security for life here in time and hereafter in eternity.

But -

Conclusion: Beware of Spiritual complacency.

So much of Christendom has fallen victim to this dreadful complacency toward the Word of God. Many have taken opportunity to distort the Scriptures to serve their own interests, even to promote their own sin and unbelief. We need to be ever vigilant that we remain true to the Word of Lord, for by it we not only know our sin, but we have been brought to life and salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Lord keep us steadfast and in your Word!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.