

December 13, 2017

Amos 8:1-14

¹This is what the Lord GOD showed me —a basket of summer fruit. ²He said, "Amos, what do you see?"

And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me,

"The end has come upon my people Israel;

I will never again pass them by.

³The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day," says the Lord GOD;

"the dead bodies shall be many,
cast out in every place. Be silent!"

⁴Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,

⁵saying, "When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;

and the sabbath,

so that we may offer wheat for sale?

We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,

and practice deceit with false balances,

⁶buying the poor for silver

and the needy for a pair of sandals,

and selling the sweepings of the wheat."

⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:

Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

⁸Shall not the land tremble on this account,

and everyone mourn who lives in it,

and all of it rise like the Nile,

and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?

⁹On that day, says the Lord GOD,

I will make the sun go down at noon,

and darken the earth in broad daylight.

¹⁰I will turn your feasts into mourning,

and all your songs into lamentation;

I will bring sackcloth on all loins,

and baldness on every head;

I will make it like the mourning for an only son,

and the end of it like a bitter day.

¹¹The time is surely coming, says the Lord GOD,

when I will send a famine on the land;

not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water,

but of hearing the words of the LORD.

¹²They shall wander from sea to sea,

and from north to east;

they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD,

but they shall not find it.

¹³In that day the beautiful young women and the young men shall faint for thirst.

¹⁴Those who swear by Ashimah of Samaria, and say, "As your god lives, O Dan," and, "As the way of Beer-sheba lives" — they shall fall, and never rise again.

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“Stop, look, and listen!” Amos’s message addresses a complex issue faced by a people whose harvest is plentiful and business is booming, yet the poor are neglected. As the prophet delivers a message warning of the need for change—for the coming of the Lord—so it is for us today.

Upon hearing Christmas whistles and bells, we busy ourselves with looking for the best gifts to give. Amos’s message sounds like a train approaching with a full head of steam, its whistles and bells making us pause to STOP, LOOK, and LISTEN. As a warning sign from a train causes us to pay attention, so are we to pay attention to Amos during the season of Advent. The words of warning are spoken about the coming of Christ the Lord and the need to be transformed. “The days are coming ... not a famine of food ... but hearing the words of the Lord” (verse 11).

Amos blows the whistle to get us to stop and be refreshed in God’s grace while looking at our surroundings to help the poor and the needy around us, to take time to look for guidance and comfort, to ask forgiveness from God, and to share the joy of Christ’s love with each other as we search for joy in the material gifts we give and receive. Advent is a time to listen for the mercy of God in meditation.

Christ whistles grace and love to us in the season of Advent. Let us prepare to STOP, LOOK, and LISTEN, as we examine ourselves.

Prayer

Almighty God, help us to look and find your peace in all our Advent busyness. Make us people of truth, obedience, and sharers of your love so that, through our lives, you may be revealed to others. Lord, may we learn to listen more and speak less as you give us courage to trust in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!