

Advent Devotional December 5, 2021

Scripture

Amos 6:1-14

- ¹ *Alas for those who are at ease in Zion,
and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria,
the notables of the first of the nations,
to whom the house of Israel resorts!*
- ² *Cross over to Calneh, and see;
from there go to Hamath the great;
then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
Are you better than these kingdoms
Or is your territory greater than their territory,*
- ³ *O you that put far away the evil day,
and bring near a reign of violence?*
- ⁴ *Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,
and lounge on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the stall;*
- ⁵ *who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,
and like David improvise on instruments of music;*
- ⁶ *who drink wine from bowls,
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!*
- ⁷ *Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,
and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.*
- ⁸ *The Lord GOD has sworn by himself
(says the LORD, the God of hosts):
I abhor the pride of Jacob
and hate his strongholds;
and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.*
- ⁹ *If ten people remain in one house, they shall die. ¹⁰And if a relative, one who burns the dead, shall take
up the body to bring it out of the house, and shall say to someone in the innermost parts of the house, "Is
anyone else with you?" the answer will come, "No." Then the relative shall say, "Hush! We must not
mention the name of the LORD."*
- ¹¹ *See, the LORD commands,
and the great house shall be shattered to bits,
and the little house to pieces.*
- ¹² *Do horses run on rocks?
Does one plow the sea with oxen?
But you have turned justice into poison
and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood*
- ¹³ *you who rejoice in Lo-debar,
who say, "Have we not by our own strength
taken Karnaim for ourselves?"*
- ¹⁴ *Indeed, I am raising up against you a nation,
O house of Israel, says the LORD, the God of hosts,*

*and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath
to the Wadi Arabah.*

Devotional

The Rev. Michael Haddox '12

“Daddy’s a liar!”

My son was only two, but through his tears, his words were clear: “Daddy’s a liar!”

I was totally taken off guard. Five minutes earlier, he was a ball of excitement. He’d just finished his Happy Meal as I was double-checking the diaper bag. I wanted to make sure we had everything we needed for his first trip to Kennywood. Now, trudging across the parking lot, he was having a full-blown meltdown.

I was confused by the amused look on my wife’s face. “Daddy didn’t lie,” she explained. “We’re going to a bigger playground. A better playground.”

I finally caught on. I had described Kennywood in terms he could understand. I had explained the day to him simply: “Finish your French fries, then we’re going to a big playground.”

What I failed to realize was my son’s inability to envision anything other than the indoor play area ten feet behind us in the fast-food restaurant. He heard the promise, but his imagination wouldn’t go beyond what he could see.

This passage in Amos forces us to consider what would make God’s chosen settle for a complacency that leads to their destruction. This isn’t just a question aimed at a group of people living thousands of years ago. It’s a question relevant for our churches today.

I believe we often lack the imagination to picture who God is calling us to be, so we settle for what we can reach for on our own efforts. Our complacency has robbed the church of its vitality and witness.

Looking at my son, I realized I couldn’t explain where I was taking him. I could only ask, “Can Daddy show you something different?” Through his tears, he simply said, “Yes,” letting go of what he saw, to follow his dad to something better.

Prayer

Father, forgive us when we look to ourselves before we look to you and complacently settle for less than who you call us to be. In this season of preparation, may we have a faith that goes beyond our understanding, as we live a life rooted in the promises and call of your grace and love. Amen.