

Monday, July 1, 2019—2 Kings 15-17

What will the preacher say when he stands to speak at your funeral? There will likely be stories that bring laughter and a few tears, but will he be able to speak truthfully of authentic conversion from spiritual death to life? Can he honestly share examples of faithfulness and fruit? Above all other testimonies, the words that point to righteousness will be most valuable.

The author of 2 Kings shared a few things about all the kings of Israel and Judah, and with some he was able to share more than with others. When he spoke of Uzziah, who reigned for 52 years, and his son Jotham, who ruled for 16, he shared very little. These men oversaw God's people for nearly 70 years, but what he chose to note was they "did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight" (15:3, 34). Their legacy could have included many things, but what he wrote is what will last.

The great problem, plaguing both the north and the south, was idolatry. The people were prone to giving their hearts and allegiance to man-made idols and ideas. They followed the examples of the pagan nations surrounding them rather than obeying the commands of the God who freed them and lived among them. Eventually, God brought judgment on the northern kingdom at the hands of the invading Assyrians (17:7-40).

The people who moved in to Israel saw the remnants of worship for Yahweh and idols, so they did the same. Pray that your life is solely devoted to Christ the King so others may see your faithfulness, tell of your faithfulness, and follow your example long after you're gone.

Sunday, June 30, 2019—Amos 7-9

The world of social media and 24-hour news sources has developed an environment where people seemingly can no longer have healthy discussion and debate. Many equate disagreement with hatred and refuse to discuss any further. The result is increasingly factious sides who continually point out faults but don't work together for growth.

Amos found himself in a similar environment. He saw visions of God's destroying Israel and begged God for His mercy (7:1-6). Then, God showed him a plumb line, a builder's tool to determine whether a wall stood at a right angle as it was

designed to stand. God said Israel was not “true.” Compared to His righteousness, they were woefully sinful. He could no longer allow their sin to go unpunished. When people heard Amos speaking about the king’s coming punishment, they rebuked him (7:10-17).

Despite the pressure, Amos continued to deliver the words of God. He told his people God was going to punish them, and there would be a famine—not of food but of hearing the word of God (8:11). As the land is parched during a drought, their souls would dry up because they did not have God’s words watering their lives. They would come to realize that what they so despised had actually be a life-giving gift of God.

God promised one day to restore after He had scattered (9:11-15). His desire is to receive the worship of the nations and use Israel as His vessel. Those who truly listened would agree His plan was good and right.

Praise God for being good, right, and faithful.

Saturday, June 29, 2019—Amos 4-6

When couples struggle, one of the foundational problems often is a lack of communication. Someone isn’t sharing important information. More often, one of the members isn’t listening. Dialogue is a two-way street.

Through Amos, God is calling His people to listen to Him and to assess their lives. Listening is hard work, and listening means hearing hard facts. God begins Amos 4 by calling the women “cows of Samaria” or “cows of Bashan” (4:1). Who would want to listen to that?

The women of the northern kingdom had lived through some hard times. Famine, drought, plagues, and war (4:6-11) had taken their toll on the nation, and now they were seemingly recovering from those things. The women were enjoying life as a result, but they were enjoying it too much. They were oppressing the poor, crushing the needy, and bossing their husbands around (4:1). They were going through the motions of worship and giving (4:4-5), but their hearts were far from God’s desires for them.

God called them to listen to Him (5:1) as He described their funeral song. Their current course would lead to death unless they came back to Him (5:4-6). They needed revival and reform so they would once again hate evil and do what was good (5:14). True justice and righteousness would be possible when their hearts turned from idols to Him (5:24-26).

Ask God to make evident the things that are leading the nation to ruin (6:6). Listen carefully to His description of idolatry and hypocrisy. Pray for courage and conviction to repent of personal sins and habits.

Friday, June 28, 2019—2 Kings 14:26-29, Amos 1-3

For decades, politicians have highlighted the condition of the economy to promote the need to keep a leader in place or remove the leader and replace him with another. “It’s the economy, stupid.” If the stock market is stable and business is booming, everything is alright. Right?

God saw the bitter suffering of His people (14:26), and He knew their misery was a direct result of their sin. He had never said He would blot out Israel because of their transgressions (14:27), so He continued to provide grace and mercy while calling them to repent under the ministry of prophets like Amos during the reign of Jeroboam II, who had brought significant military and economic gains to his kingdom.

Amos was a shepherd, so he lived a simple life. He spoke against extravagance not out of jealousy but conviction. The people had gained their comforts and possessions through ungodly avenues.

He spoke judgment against Israel’s neighbors (1:3-2:3) because they had mistreated God’s people and dishonored God Himself. Then, Amos turned his attention to Judah and Israel. They, too, had sinned against God. They had mistreated the poor and lived in sexual immorality. They chased other gods and forced religious leaders to defile themselves (2:4-2:12).

Like a roaring lion, the prophets of God were calling out a warning (3:6). “My people have forgotten what it means to do right” (3:9a) and filled their coffers through theft and violence. He was preparing for punishment.

Pray for a life fully devoted and pleasing to God alone.

Thursday, June 27, 2019—2 Kings 14:21-25, Jonah 1-4

Though the countries were struggling spiritually, their outward appearances seemed healthy. Uzziah had become king of Judah and rebuilt the town of Elath. Jeroboam II was king of Israel, and he reclaimed cities near the Dead Sea that had been lost in battle. Things seemed fine.

During Jeroboam’s reign, God raised up the prophet Jonah, and his ministry was

a telling snapshot of the spiritual condition of the country. He served reluctantly, having run away from God's call. He shared the good news of repentance begrudgingly, not wanting his enemies to find favor from God. He pouted selfishly when God worked His wonders. Things were most certainly not fine, yet God was willing to continue His work.

In Jonah, God had his first foreign missionary, and He called him to Nineveh, the capital city of the vilest enemies of God's people. Assyria was the most powerful nation at the time, and they were a threat to Israel, yet God had compassion on them. He was willing to call them to repentance instead of immediately striking them down. Jonah ran away from the call, but God changed his mind through divine action. In the process, even pagan sailors came to worship the one true God (1:16).

When Jonah had lost all hope, he turned his thoughts to Yahweh, and he found mercy and salvation (2:7-9). This was the message he took to Nineveh (3:1-10), and the message He continues to share with the world.

Pray for obedience in sharing the call to repentance and for joy rather than anger when God radically transforms sinners.

Wednesday, June 26, 2019—Joel 1-3

When God was preparing His people to enter the Promised Land, He told them they would one day forget Him. Their lives would become comfortable, and they would become complacent. That complacency would lead to spiritual neglect and decline. The people promised Him that would not happen, but the prophets saw it sadly becoming reality.

Joel spoke to the people after a terrible locust swarm ravaged the nation's crops. There was nothing to bring to the Temple for worship. There was nothing to provide for the family. Joel called for a national assembly to weep and mourn because they were seeing visibly what God was going to do to them spiritually if they did not repent of their sin. They needed to cry out to God for mercy (1:19-20).

Joel called this coming time of judgment the Day of the Lord. His mighty action would bring darkness and destruction that no one would escape. Righteous and unrighteous would suffer, so God was calling on them to repent and turn to Him (2:12-13) and experience His compassion and kindness. He wanted to restore them and bless them (2:18-25).

Just as the locusts were a foreshadowing of the actual armies that would march in judgment, the healing rains God promised were preparation for the coming of His Spirit (2:28-32). He fulfilled that at Pentecost in Acts 2 when He sent His Spirit on the believers in Jerusalem. He will even more fully reveal Himself at the final battle (3:14-16), and He will make an eternal home for Himself and His people (3:20-21).

Praise God for His righteousness. Live to obey and honor Him.

Tuesday, June 25, 2019—2 Kings 11-14:20

Scripture decries woe on those who call good evil and who call evil good. This is the nature of sin—displacing the worship of God for the worship of self and redefining what is right and wrong. When King Ahaziah died, his mother Athaliah killed the rest of the royal family so she could be in charge. When she later learned one of the sons, Joash, was alive and had been anointed as king, she accused the people of treason (11:14) when, in fact, she was the one who was guilty. Sin is blinding and deceiving.

Joash was only seven years old when he became king, so God graciously gave him the priest Jehoida to instruct and guide him (12:2). God can use the youngest of disciples, but he does not expect anyone to serve alone. He has given His Body, the church, as a source of encouragement and accountability to ensure healthy growth and service.

God also uses the oldest of His disciples to encourage and exhort. Elisha was near death, yet the king relied on his input. Elisha prophesied victory for the king but told him his faith could have been greater (13:19). Older saints can inspire confidence and urge believers to deeper faith.

Without good counsel, the believer can become unbalanced like Amaziah. He wisely did not kill the innocent children of his father's assassins (14:5-6), yet he chose to go into battle against a more-powerful Israelite army and lost badly (14:8-14).

Pray for a life of godly wisdom—knowing truth and acting well.

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