

Not a tame lion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 June 2018

Preacher: Hoong Phak Ng

[0 : 00] Happy Father's Day. I missed part of the prayer for me. I was quite transfixed with the reading of God's Word just now. Thank you, Chen Lok.

Today we are continuing with our series on Amos 3. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that we have you as our Father in Heaven. We just pray that you will illuminate your words to our hearts, Lord.

In Jesus' name we pray. Now in the aftermath of the general elections, 14, on May 15, this is a political speech, the Malay Mail carried this report.

And I'm just going to read the report, so it's not what I'm saying, right? This is the news report. In the past, beaten BN Youth Chief Kyrie Jamaluddin has admitted that the coalition leaders lost power because they had become so confident of their invincibility.

The 42-year-old also admitted that facts signalling the loss of public support had been presented. But said leaders were so detached from reality, they swept aside all criticism and refused to accept them.

[1 : 28] What happened was we became delusional. We got drunk on our own cool aid and we got carried away, he said in an interview with the Channel News Asia.

Was there a signal? Yes, there was clear signals. But we became oblivious to these signals. Nobody wanted to acknowledge we had a problem.

It was a terrible mistake on our part, he added. Around 765 BC, under the rule of Jeroboam 2, the word of Amos about a coming judgment would have been hard for Israel to believe.

Israel then felt invincible too. They thought that God really had no problems with them. Why did they feel so secure?

Firstly, they were God's chosen people. God will surely punish Israel's enemies. But he will surely not touch his own people. So they chose to put their security in their spiritual heritage.

[2 : 43] Secondly, political and military development made them think that God's favor was upon the nation rather than displeasure.

There was peace in the land. The surrounding nations were relatively weak. And they posed no threat to Israel. Israel had a strong army.

And Jeroboam too had military successes. Samaria, the capital city, was a fortress on a hill, 300 feet high above the surrounding plains.

And it's a very good natural position for defense. And they placed their security on their strength. Thirdly, worship at Bethel and Dan were done religiously.

God must surely be pleased with that. Perhaps they thought God surely owes them his protective hand. They placed their security on their religious practices.

[3 : 50] Fourthly, the ruling class, the civil administrators and the elite were rich and prosperous. Now surely God was pleased with them to bless them with material wealth.

See in verse 11, in the chapter that we are reading today, they had strongholds, they had fortresses. They had not just one house to live in.

Many commoners had to share houses. They had a winter house in verse 15 and a summer house. And others had mansions. And they had furniture of luxury.

Sofas and beds and even houses adorned with ivory, which was as expensive at that time as it is now. Didn't Deuteronomy promise material wealth as a blessing from God?

Surely Amos, this crazy foreign prophet from Judah must have heard wrongly. So Israel placed her confidence for her security from God's wrath on her spiritual heritage, her strength, her religion and her wealth.

[5 : 00] And we find in Amos 3, God demolishes each of their misplaced confidence. Let's start with verse 1. God's judgment is fair.

Hear this word, people of Israel. The word the Lord has spoken against you, against the whole family I brought up of Egypt. You only have I chosen of all the enemies of the earth.

Therefore, I will punish you for all your sins. The Israelites were correct in remembering that they were a special people. God says that He has chosen them from all the families of the earth.

And He brought this whole family, both Israel and Judah, out of Egypt, out of slavery, to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Listen, the Israelites must have been thinking, since God chose them, they must occupy a special place in God's heart.

And He will not judge them. However, verse 2 must have shocked them. You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth.

[6 : 10] Therefore, therefore, I will punish you for all your sins. Jesus said in Luke 12, 48, From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.

And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Israel was chosen to be a light and a blessing to the nations. The laws of God were given so that their nation would be one where righteousness and justice, both in the private and public spheres, would be displayed for all mankind, where people were treated with dignity and fairly.

They were to love their neighbors as themselves. In Deuteronomy 27 to 28, the Old Testament covenantal blessings and curses were listed.

If the Israelites forgot what God did for them and did not live as His people, the curses of the covenant were inevitable.

Punishment will follow when the time is right. As Yahweh judges Israel's enemies for their sins, He will judge Israel's sins.

[7 : 29] Israel's heritage is not grounds for escaping God's judgment. He is fair. What about us in this New Testament era, on this side of the cross of Jesus Christ?

We too cannot depend on our spiritual heritage to be at peace with God. We cannot say that since I am born into an SIB family or a Baptist family or whatever denominations, so God is okay with me.

Nor can I point out to my believing grandparents or my believing parents and think that everything will be alright for us when judgment comes.

Pointing out that God visited your people during the miracles on Mount Murud in 1985 will also not give you an advantage. Our spiritual heritage will not spare us from judgment.

But what if you personally believe in Jesus for your salvation? Even though as born-again Christians, there is now no condemnation because Jesus has taken our punishment upon Himself on the cross, it is a mistake to think that God is not concerned with sin in our lives.

- [8 : 52] He has commanded us to put off our old self and put on our new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. And we have read this in Ephesians.
- He, as our Heavenly Father, is still in the business of disciplining us so that we will conform to the image of His Son. Okay, so Amos' audience may agree with him that God will punish sin.
- But surely, they say, our sins are not that great compared to the Gentile nations. A little indiscretion here, a little cheating there, a little stealing here.
- Ah yeah, it is not that serious for God to take notice. Everybody does it. It is culturally acceptable. What you say is not from God.
- You are just a jealous foreigner from Judah. Cannot stand that we are blessed by God. Who are you anyway? Just a shepherd. Amos then, through a series of simple rhetorical questions from verses 3 to 6, will try to convince his audience that he was a real thing.
- [10 : 07] Now, this series of questions are everyday illustrations of logical cause and effect. His audience would have no problem agreeing with the simple logic presented in them.
- The more discerning ones may be even able to pick up the spiritual implications of those questions that God's judgment is inevitable.
- Now, let's look at verse 3. Do two walk together, the effect, unless they have agreed to do so, the cause?
- Surely, people will walk together only if they are in agreement. And some will ponder in their hearts, Is God still walking with Israel?
- Is Israel and Yahweh still in agreement? Verse 4. Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey?
- [11 : 14] No. A lion will only roar when it is ready to pounce on its prey. If it roars when the prey is 10 miles away, the lunge would have escaped.
- Does it roar, does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing? No. It will growl in satisfaction only when its prey has been caught. So, some will ponder, Is this lion the Lord?
- What is this prey he has caught? Verse 5. Does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when there is no bait there?
- No. Only when there is a bait in the trap, would a bird bother to fly down to it, right? Does a trap spring up from the ground if it has caught nothing?
- Again, only when an animal steps in the trap, or a bird flew into that trap, the trap will spring up to trap the animal. Now, some in the audience may wonder, have they been caught in their sins?
- [12 : 25] Has Yahweh gotcha them? Verse 6. When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not people tremble.
- Of course. When a trumpet of warning sounds in a city, the effect will be a panic populace. Some will wonder rightly, hmm, is this Amos guy sounding the trumpet?
- Should we be scared? And when disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it? Surely, yes. That was Israel's understanding.
- The Lord is sovereign over His creation and over history. So, if they agreed with all the above statements, they also know that verse 7, surely the sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants, the prophets.
- In Israel's experience, this was exactly what the Lord does. He announced His plans to Abraham, to Moses, to Aaron, to Joshua, and so on, before He acted.

[13 : 39] Now, verse 8. The Lord has wrought, or the lion has wrought. Who will not fear? The sovereign Lord has spoken. Who can but prophesy?

Amos is saying, Amos is saying, I have no choice. I am under obligation to speak to you. You think I want to come here from Judah to confront you, ah? God has revealed His plans to me.

I cannot stay silent. And even though it was Amos' writing, it was God who had spoken. Verse 1.

The Lord has spoken against you. Verse 8. The sovereign Lord has spoken. Verse 11. The sovereign Lord says. Verse 12. The Lord says.

Verse 13. The Lord, the Lord Almighty, declares. What Moses has written was God's own word. So in effect, Amos is saying, that these are not my words.

[14 : 40] These are God's. So listen or ignore them at your own peril. And secondly, these rhetorical questions come to the conclusion that the lion has wrought.

It is logical to be afraid. It is logical to pay attention. Okay, I bet you if a lion roars here, all of us will run. Right?

None of us will be stupid. None of us will say, ooh, kitty, kitty. Right? So in Amos 1 to 2, he writes, the Lord roars from Zion.

The lion does not roar for no reason. From the description of this lion in verses 4, 6 and 12, this lion is obviously not tame. This lion is wild and strong and his roar is fearsome and terrifying.

And verse 8, his roar causes people to fear. His roar is a warning. So when it comes to God's judgment, God's people cannot say, I never saw it coming.

[15 : 56] There's always plenty of warning. When he roars, his people better be afraid and repent. If not, his judgment is inevitable.

And what has this got to do with us 2,000 years on this side of the cross? Some people will want you to believe that God is not in the business of punishment anymore.

He is the God of love who will never punish people, who will never send calamities on the world, or who will never send people to hell.

This cannot be true. God gave warning to the early church in the book of Acts and Revelations. He continues to discipline his children today.

We see God punishing evil in the Second World War, in the defeat of Pol Pot at Cambodia, and of ISIS in Syria. We see the expose on the sexual abuse within the church, and the downfall of corrupt leaders around the world.

[17 : 09] And the Bible also tells us that there is a coming judgment that will involve the whole world on the day of the Lord. Jesus talks about this judgment.

Paul, Peter, and John writes about the final judgment in their letters. For example, Paul wrote in Romans that it will be the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed and God will repay each person according to what they have done.

A final judgment is coming. And that is good news to me. Our holy and righteous and loving God cannot but be angry with the sins of this world.

The social injustice, the oppression, the abuse, the violence, the ungodliness, God is not blind to them. God will judge them.

God will judge them. And that is good news. It is not in his character to turn a blind eye to them. He says that vengeance is his alone and his judgment will be perfect and true.

[18 : 24] Now, even if the perpetrators of evil are escaping the imperfect justice of this world, they will not escape from the perfect judge to come.

The abductors of Pastor Raymond Koh, of Joshua and Ruth Helmy, of Amri Chekmat, they will face punishment for their actions.

The person who ordered the murder of El Tantuya will not escape the final judgment. The culprits who stole millions of ringgit from Malaysia will come to justice even if they escape now.

The people behind the human trafficking horror at Wan Keliang will face a righteous judge. The victims of the sex trade, school shootings in America, the victims of religious terrorists all over the world will have their sufferings avenged by God.

The millions of unborn sacrificed for economic and lifestyle expediency will have their cries heard.

[19 : 35] There is a coming inevitable day of judgment, the day of the Lord. Wrongdoing will not be overlooked. God is a righteous judge.

So, what caused the Lord to roar at this period of time in the history of Israel? You see in verse 9, interestingly, God calls upon two nations to be a witness against Israel.

Who did he call? He said, proclaim to the fortress of Ashdod. And Ashdod is a city representing the Palestinians. And to the fortress of Egypt, assemble yourself on the mountains of Samaria.

God is saying, come, come, come. Look. Look at Samaria, the city, the capital city of Israel. That God would call these two arch enemies of Israel to be weaknesses to Israel's sin must seem incredulous to the Israelites.

Their own human rights violations were appalling. They were immoral, brutal, and unjust. And last week, we heard that the Philistines had enslaved entire communities and would face judgment themselves.

[20 : 55] So, for God to call these nations to bear weakness against Israel would mean that Israel fell short even by the standards of international decency. So, what did they see when they appeared into Samaria?

When they looked into Samaria? In verse 9 to 10, they saw great unrest in the city. They saw oppression of the people.

They saw storehouses of plundered and looted merchandise. The unrest and oppression was due to how the rich and powerful treated the poor and powerless and how they came about their riches.

We noted in Amos 2 last week that they sold the innocent for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trampled on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and denied justice to the oppressed.

They had sinful sexual practices and profaned God's holy name. They deprived the poor of their garments needed to keep them warm. They imposed unjust fines for the poor.

[22 : 18] They put down those who wanted to live righteously and silenced those who spoke God's uncomfortable truth. God's conclusion here was that they did not know how to do right.

they did not know how to do right. They lost their moral compass. They had abandoned God's law. Now the Old Testament laws were meant to protect the poor and provide equitable distribution of wealth of the nation.

The problem was not that there was wealthy people in Israel. God was okay with that. Rather, the problem was that the royal family, the ruling class, the government officials, and the judiciary, they were guilty of corruption, of fraudulent business practices, of violence and oppression towards the poor and the defenseless.

Now this is also that they can maintain their luxurious lifestyle and privilege. they may have started off well, but because wealth had become an idol, they would do anything to satisfy the want for more.

And their conscience became callous. They actually thought that any wealth was a sure sign of God's blessing. God was not impressed with their ill-gotten wealth.

[23 : 45] It was not a sign of blessing. Rather, it was an actual reason for God's anger. What does God say about material possession today?

God is still against ill-gotten wealth. I have seen a forest harvested by loggers plunging a once-thriving penan community into malnutrition.

There are sweatshops all around the world, slaving so that the rich can become richer. On a personal level, how are we treating the people under our employment?

How can we care more for the poor in society? God calls us to be generous and not tight-fisted. God calls us God is surely not happy when the preachers of the prosperity gospel living in luxury tell the poor in Nigeria that if they do not pay their tithe, they will go to hell?

Or the one recently in America asking his supporters to finance the purchase of his fourth personal jet so that he can be closer to Jesus.

[25 : 09] Paul reminds Timothy in Timothy 6, 1 Timothy 6, verse 6, says, the world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant or put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and to be willing to share.

In this way, they will lay up treasures for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they can take hold of the life that is truly life.

Now God has spoken. Was Israel ready to listen? God has given them the reason why he has wrought his warning. Instead of putting her confidence in her heritage, her strength and her wealth, Israel should have put her confidence in walking right, at peace with God and one another, you know, society of righteousness and justice. Were they ready to repent and turn back to God?

Or would they be delusional and be drunk in their own cool aid and ignore the signals like what YB Kyrie described his own party? Had Israel become so confident in her own invisibility?

God would strike at the very heart of Israel's false securities, her false idols. His judgment will be comprehensive. Let's look at verse 11 to 15.

[27 : 34] Therefore, this is what the sovereign Lord says, An enemy will overrun your land, pull down your strongholds and plunder your fortresses.

In return for plundering and looting that the powerful did, their own strongholds and fortresses will be pulled down and plundered. Verse 12, this is what the Lord says, As the shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth only two leg bones and a piece of a ear, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch.

So the Lord was comparing. You know, people want to rescue the lamb that has been, the sheep that has been caught by the lion.

When they go there, they left only a piece of ear and two leg bones. In the same way, when people want to go and rescue Samaria, all they find is the head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch.

Nothing will be left of Samaria except reminders of their ill-gotten wealth. Their security in their own strength and invincibility will be shattered.

[29 : 02] Kyrie's party thought that it was invincible. It was defeated at the Poles after more than 60 years in power. Some top judges, CEOs, heads of government departments, agents and agencies found themselves out of a job.

We cannot put our confidence in our positions of power or authorities or find security or our worth in them. They will fail one day.

We need to put our confidence and find our worth in Christ alone. You are a child of the Most High God. You are a child of the Most High God.

Everything else is insignificant compared to that privilege. Verse 13. Hear this and testify against the descendants of Jacob.

Verse 14. God says he will destroy Bethel.

[30 : 26] Bethel means house of God. Notice the plural though. Israel worshipped many gods.

They had many altars. When the original Israel, when Israel was still one nation, under David and then Solomon, remember that nation broke into two?

The northern Israel and the southern Judah. Now the proper centre of worship was in Jerusalem, in Judah in the south. Right? If you read 1 Kings 8, when that temple was dedicated, God made his presence visibly seen in that temple.

So in an effort to prevent his citizens from travelling to Jerusalem, into rival territory, Jeroboam number one, earlier on was Jeroboam number two.

Now Jeroboam number one, the earlier Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, decided to set up two centres of worship in Israel itself, the northern kingdom. Dan, not Dan, Dan, the nation near the northern border and Bethel near the southern border.

[31 : 49] And, if you don't know the story, he made two golden calves. He made two golden calves and placed one in Dan and one in Bethel and told the Israelites that they represented Yahweh.

They never learnt, do they? The golden calves again. Bethel was the centre of idolatry and apostasy.

It's called the house of God, but it wasn't. God will destroy Bethel. Now the horns of the altar, why is he talking about the horns of the altar?

The horns of the altar serves two purposes. One is that some of the blood of the animal sacrifice will be applied for the atonement of sins. It is also there God's protection would be available.

If you read 1 Kings 15 or 1 Kings 22, people run to the horn of the altar, they hold on to the horn of the altar and people, and the kings and all that will not come and catch them, will not come and kill them.

[33 : 04] They have protection if they hold on to the horns of the altar. What is God going to do with the horns of the altar in Bethel? He's going to cut them off. He's going to fall to the ground.

What does that mean? There's no possibility to make atonement for their sins. And there's no more protection from the altar.

God was going to shatter their false confidence in their religious practices. There's much to say about not trusting our religious practices, our religious proclamations for our security.

but that will be a message for the coming chapter. Not only will God destroy the fortress of Samaria and Bethel, the so-called house of God, in verse 15, He will tear down the winter houses along with the summer houses and the houses adorned with ivory and the mansions.

Everything! The confidence that they place in their wealth and prosperity will be shattered. One has to conclude that God's judgment will be comprehensive.

[34 : 26] Look at the destruction He intends to allow. Nothing left. Now, this prophecy was written around 765 BC.

The nation was destroyed by the Assyrians on 722 BC, about 40 years later. In the end, Israel will find that she cannot rely on her spiritual heritage, her strength, her religion, or her wealth to get God to turn from punishing her for her sins.

Israel would fall not because of the superior power of the Assyrians, but because of its own spiritual and social corruption. Now, there will be a more complete destruction that will come one day.

Peter writes in 2 Peter 3 that the day of the Lord will come like a thief. That day, when God judges the world for its sin, Peter writes that the heaven will disappear with a roar and the elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. Nothing. Nothing left.

[36 : 02] The earth that we know of, that we see now, the heavens that we see now, all gone, destroyed. Needless to say, we cannot appeal to our spiritual heritage, our power opposition in society, our religious practices, or our wealth to escape that day of judgment. salvation. The apostles warn us that there's only one way of escape. There's only one person in whom we can place our confidence in for salvation.

We do not need the Jewish temple, the horns, or the altars, or the animal sacrificial blood. The sacrifice of Jesus in Calvary has made the temple altars obsolete.

the fact that God's judgment is coming makes the gospel of Jesus Christ so glorious and so precious. In Revelation 5, this lion of Judah who judges the nations is the lion who was slain so that you and I do not have to bear the punishment of our own sins.

He did it on the cross on our behalf. The wrath of the lamb has been satisfied by his own death. There's now no condemnation for those of us who believe and trust in Jesus for our salvation.

[37 : 41] And the gospel is not you do, the gospel is what Jesus did. It is by grace alone. So, when we put our trust in him, we have passed from condemnation to justification.

The penalty and the power of sin over us has been broken and we can now truly live for God. And when we look forward in keeping to his promise to the day of the Lord, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells and that is his promise for those who believe in him.

I can imagine, just imagine, right? Imagine together a sin at the judgment seat of Christ. He will look at you and me and everyone who believes in him here.

You know what he will say? Guilty. Guilty as charged for all the sins you have committed. guilty. Then he will say, your punishment has been paid for by me. There is now no condemnation for you.

[38 : 58] You are forgiven. A new creation, a new man. Come and join me in my father's house. The wedding feast of the lamb will be starting soon.

Remember to put on the wedding garments of good deeds as a testimony to the transformation that the Holy Spirit is doing in your life. Did in your life. Imagine that sin.

I mean, it's not in scripture, but imagine that sin. That's what it could be. if you do not know Jesus yet, now it's time to put your trust in him for the forgiveness of your sins.

If sometime in the past you have trusted Jesus, but now you are not so sure, your love seems to have gone cold, you seem to have lost your way, today is the day to come home.

Do not resist the Holy Spirit's invitation. Without Jesus, we are still slaves to sins and we will bear the punishment of our own sins.

[40 : 07] The warning of the coming judgment has been announced and there is only one name under heaven for man to be saved, the Lord Jesus Christ. Come, let us put our full confidence in him alone.

I invite the music team to come up. and we will have a little more than the one one one one one one one one one one two one one one one one two