

An End to Counterfeit Religion

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[0 : 00] God, thank you for how you have so faithfully spoken to your people throughout the centuries of time. We pray with great expectation that you would speak to us again this morning.

But God, for that to happen, we need you to breathe upon us, to breathe upon me that I would speak the words that you would have me speak faithful to your word, and that you would also prepare our hearts, prepare ears, prepare us to be able to be that good soil to receive your word, and not just receive it, but live according to it.

In Jesus' name, amen. Please be seated. I can still see the sign vividly in front of me saying, beware of alligators.

It was a warning sign. My brother, myself, and some of our buddies were down at a pro-life training conference thing in Florida. It was at a retreat center, and as any retreat center in Florida that has a body of water is part of it, there was a warning sign saying, beware of alligators.

But we took that warning sign as an invitation, because my brother had brought a knife with him. He's kind of like, he carves and does that kind of stuff. So he had this really big knife, and so he, with some really strong tape, attached it to a big pole, and we took the pole, took the canoe.

[1 : 14] Somehow our path took us by all the ladies, and we made public the fact that we were going to go alligator hunting. I know you would have done the same, and we got into the water, and we just canoe out, all happy, ready to get in the canoe.

Yeah, yeah, no, definitely in a canoe. And we just paddled out, all happy that we're going to get dinner for everybody, because alligator meat, that stuff is fresh, especially when it's fresh. And so all of a sudden we see an alligator.

Now I've read about alligators, I've seen them on TV, on YouTube, but this, it was right there. I was the one, not with the paddle, but with the pole and the knife at the end of it, and it was close enough that I could have jabbed that thing with my spear.

Only when we looked into the eyes of that alligator, that big knife I was holding in my hand became very, very small. And I remember I stand up, and you can hear the heavy breathing of everyone in the canoe, like, oh my goodness, oh my goodness, I'm holding the thing.

I'm like, guys, should I do it? Should I stab it? And I'm realizing, there's no hope, my knife against this alligator. Like, it was a puny, small knife. And all of a sudden the alligator, like, it was looking at us, and just, pfft, under the water.

[2 : 21] And the guy just started canoeing as fast as they could, and people started praying. I don't think there were, some of them were cessationists, they're praying in tongues. It was intense. It was next level.

And so we get back to the shore, and yeah, I can see it so vividly, because it wasn't that long ago, regrettably. It was just last year. I'd like to think I was more mature than that, but I'm not.

We've heard about alligators, but once we saw it, we realized an axiom I hope you all have already taken to heart. Never underestimate an alligator, right? Now, perhaps a better analogy from trying to get at, if you've read *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and if you haven't, that's your homework today, this afternoon to get it done.

But in the final one, the last battle, these people believe, don't believe in this pagan religion. And at the center of this pagan religion is the enemy, Tash.

She represents Satan. And so one of the main dark characters calls upon Tash to come. He doesn't believe Tash is actually a thing. I don't know if it's pronounced Tosh or whatever, but Tash Tash, potato potato.

[3 : 23] They call upon this thing they don't believe in, and this evil, wicked, Satan character shows up. They've underestimated him, and he's actually this wicked, ferocious, human-consuming thing,

and causes destruction.

And they realize, never underestimate the enemy. I share these uncomfortable analogies with you, and they become uncomfortable as you realize who I'm talking about. I'm not talking about Tash. I'm not talking about the serpent, the enemy of our souls, nor am I talking about alligators and wildlife that you might see in National Geographic.

I'm actually talking, trying to make an analogy for God. For God, the God that we've invited into our hearts, the God that we sing our songs to as we turn to Amos and read God's description of God's self.

We encounter a God so much more fierce and so different than the God that we expect. He's so much more real, and he's so much more terrifying than we'd expect.

I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said, this is God's words, strike the capitals until the threshold shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people, and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword.

[4 : 28] Not one of them shall flee away. Not one of them shall escape. If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them. If they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them.

And if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, their eye will command the serpent, and it shall bite them. And if they go into captivity before their enemies, their eye will command the sword, and it shall kill them.

And I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good. Who is this God? Who is this God that we've invited into our hearts, of whom we are the temple of his Holy Spirit?

Who is this God that we love and sing our songs to, and teach little kids about in Sunday school, you hear just beyond those doors. Who is this God that Amos sees, that we love and follow? He's so much more fierce in these words, at least than I expect, and perhaps you.

We've spent the past ten weeks, our entire summer, in the book of Amos. And one of the things we've seen again, and again, and again, is God rebuking his people, uncalling them from, their false religion that they had made.

[5 : 32] The religion had been made by their king, King Jeroboam. He's the one that brought this split between the one country of Israel. About 150, 60 years before Amos is reading these words, Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12 had led a revolt, and him with ten of the twelve tribes of Israel had kind of cut the land in half, and they took the northern kingdom called Israel, and then the Davidic kings, the sons of David, had Judah, which was Jerusalem, and the southern half of Israel.

And when he did that, he created this false religion, and this is what God is speaking into. The false religion had so much of the real religion, the real stuff of Yahweh, but there was a few things that were not okay.

And one of them we talked about before, is that they had copied the practice of the Canaanites. The Canaanite religion was all about the sacrifices you do, the liturgy you'd read, this stuff, but it wasn't about how you live.

And so in their practices, they had very specific ways that you're supposed to pour out your wine libation before the gods, and ways that you're supposed to offer your child a sacrifice to Baal, and these types of things.

It was very specific about the sacrifices you would make, your religious spiritual duty. But it didn't speak into your employee-employer relationships. It didn't talk about how you're supposed to treat your children, or your wife, or your husband.

[6 : 48] It didn't speak and define how healthy sexuality is supposed to be. It didn't touch the stuff of everyday life. It was just a religion of the stuff that we do. And you see that, if you've been here these other weeks, or you just read through Amos yourself, you can see that God again and again is saying, stop it with your sacrifices.

Stop seeking me at Bethel, and Gilgal, and Beersheba. Stop doing all this religious stuff. I want your life. I want you. I want you. Not just your words. Not just your songs. Not just your liturgy. Not just your spiritual stuff.

In a sense, if he was speaking to us, he'd say, I don't just want your Sunday mornings. I don't just want your Wednesday small group, or your church on Wednesday. I want you. I want your life. The scriptures are filled with God revealing the way of life, his way, his way of love, the way that we're supposed to treat our employees and employers, the way that we're supposed to, like the

descriptions of even when you build homes, how to do it in such a way that there's safety standards to protect the innocent, a call for us to care for the poor and the downtrodden.

The way of God, the true religion, speaks to all of life. And yet the people of God had begun to follow the Canaanite way, although they weren't doing necessarily all the practice of the Canaanites.

They actually were doing many of the things that the scriptures called them to regarding their sacrifices, but that's where it stopped. They had made a religion that they could contain just regarding their sacrifices.

[8 : 03] And that can be so many of us today, that our being a Christian means that we go to church. It might mean that we tithe. It might mean that we do these spiritual things, but we're not actually letting it shape and define our life.

The religion that Jeroboam had made for his people, that reflected so much of the true religion, it had this, it was this religion of convenience. You see, Jeroboam was concerned that his people would go to the temple where they were supposed to offer sacrifice to God.

And he was concerned that if they'd go to the temple, which was in Judah, the other kingdom, that their allegiance to him would begin to erode. So to protect his own kingship, to protect his own country, he created this counterfeit religion, a religion that was still trying to worship the real Yahweh, and yet he had made this stuff that was more convenient for them.

So instead of going down to the temple, he made, they had their own altars. And part of that, when that all began, was he started this feast of, it was like the feast of Booth, Sukkot.

It's one of the biblical feasts God commands people to keep. In 1 Kings 12, as he launches his own kingdom, he creates a feast that kind of mirrors that. So much of the practice that God had said, and in Jeroboam's religion, rather than the Levites being the priests, the ones that God had set aside, he made it so anyone who wanted to be, could be a priest.

[9 : 15] And he himself stood by the altar, in that place of the high priest, and put himself as a mediator between the people and God. And this is, as much as so much of it sounded like truth, and like the stuff of Yahweh, of the true God, I am who I am, it was of his own making.

And so one of the things that, not for you, but for me, that I've been praying in preparation for today, as I read Amos 9, is God show me, where I've taken your righteous ways, and just twisted them a bit, to be a religion of my own convenience.

Where I'm beginning to define the terms, and life, and everything, based on what feels right to me, what's convenient for me, what I can contain, instead of what actually is a view. And so as I thought, thought back to the conversations I've had, even the past few months, with fellow young people, about what the Bible says, about so many different things, about marriage, about sexuality, about the roles of husbands and wives, about what church should look like, all these things.

I listen in my memory, to the amount of times, that we have said, well this doesn't feel right to me, or I feel like this is true, and that type of language. When we're speaking like that, well this is what seems right to me, this is what feels right to me.

One of my friends actually, used the words of, he's like, I'm cool with, the Bible's teaching about everything, except for this. And then he has his own definition, for a contemporary issue.

[10 : 32] And I like that he's honest about that, but I'm concerned for him, I'm concerned for me, I'm concerned for all of us, in this post-modern world, that we're okay, defining how we should live life, and how we should walk with God, based on our own feelings, on our own sense of what's right and wrong.

Because although sometimes, our senses are right, although sometimes you're moved with compassion, to the ways of God, and caring for the things he cares about, many times we're going to find, that our gut feeling is wrong, that our feelings deceive us, that what seems right to us, is actually not right.

And what seems so healthy to us, and loving to us, and caring to us, is actually hatred toward that person, and that it's actually to their own detriment. And so if we're going to be a people, who are going to listen to the words of Amos, not just hear the words be read, in Nora's epic Bible reading voice, but actually obey the word, the way of God.

We need to be people, who are asking God, and looking at the scriptures, God what do you say? God how do you define marriage? How do you define, what church should look like? How do you define sexuality?

How do you define, what do you say? I mean if we're at our job, and I've done it, I've been there at work, and there was, just confession time, the courts can come after me later, but I was working at Parliament Hill, and I come across a letter, that someone had sent, into my member of parliament, and somehow I had missed it, and so now it's months upon months overdue.

[11 : 59] It would be very inconvenient, for me to bring it, to my member of parliament, and let her see, that I actually had missed this, and it'd be awkward, and so I shredded it, and I told myself, like this is, you know, like no one's going to miss it, and not, no one, I'm not going to get in trouble, the person doesn't expect a response, whatever.

I said all these things that, you know what, I think most of that's true, and they never complained about it, I'm fine, no one knows about it, except now for all of us, but I, I did, I did wrong. I, what I did was actually, completely wrong, and getting rid of that letter, but, but I was defining, like to me, it felt a lot more right to me, than going and fessing up to my boss, I did that, and I, I share that with you, knowing that I'm speaking, not to a bunch of perfect people, but to people who also, in various ways, have defined what's right and wrong, for yourselves, and the words before, it's not just today, but through the pages of Amos, God is calling them, not to define what's right and wrong, based on what they feel, at the moment, or what seems right to them, and their friends, and their culture, but to actually yield to God, and his ways, but perhaps the most devastating way, that we do the religion of Jeroboam, defining things in our own terms, is actually our definition, of who God is, if you think of the songs, we tend to sing, if you think of the prayers, we tend to pray, they reflect certain elements, of who God is, but if you actually read, the scriptures, which we're blessed, to be in a church that does, not just our favorite parts, but through the whole Bible, you see a God, who's so different, than we expect, so much more real, and invasive, in a sense, than we expect, who cares about, every element of life, more than we would like him to, who is more fierce, who has his holiness, his righteous justice, more than we expect, we tend to like to speak, today in North America, about the kindness, and the mercy, and the love of God, but the severity of God, is not something, we like to think of, in Romans 11, 22,

Paul writes, consider the kindness, and the severity of God, and I think most of us, like to just do the first bit, to consider the kindness of God, but the kindness, the love, the mercy, the grace of God, is seen in its fullness, when you actually consider, the fullness of who God is, including his holiness, and his righteous wrath, and judgment, we need to not define God, on our own terms, and what we like, again, we have invited this God, into our lives, into our hearts, we are a temple, of this Holy Spirit, of who he is, last year, I was just really tired, I wanted to spend some sweet time, with the Lord, so I turned on some worship tunes, on my phone, and I made myself, an Epsom salt bath, and lit some candles, turned the light off, I just like, was just chilling with the Lord, I'm just like, God thank you for your goodness, and kindness, and then boom, like a train, just hit me, these passages from Amos, and who, the severity of God, and I became afraid, rightly so, also I'm just like, who is this God, that's in the bathtub with me, you know, like who is this God, who's right there, dwelling with me, who we've invited into our hearts, he's so much more fierce, than I understand, and because so many churches, we don't actually, tend to preach this stuff, again I'm so grateful, Church of the Messiah does, but so many of the churches, I'd grown up with, never touched this stuff, I had no mechanism, no grid for understanding, these passages of the Bible, all I saw was that God, was so much more fierce, than I can understand, you know, the opening chapters, opening verses of Amos, speaks of the lion that roars, or rather it speaks of the God who roars, and it's so easy for us, to kind of see that simply as a lion, and we get the lion's roar, so that's okay, but as I was reading through this, that actually this is the king who roars, this is a very fierce king, standing before us, and him being a king who roars, the roar of God, is not an empty roar, it's not just like he roars, as a big show, and a big whatever, like light show, but really he's this little lamb, yes, he is the lamb that was slain, but he also is the one who roars, and not, and brings, brings judgment upon it, and so you see, as we've gone through chapter by chapter, looking, carefully, meticulously looking at, the various ways, that God's calling his people, to life, to repentance, to his ways, including caring for the poor, including healthy sexuality, integrity, sexuality defined by God, what is pure, we've looked at, so many different elements, of walking with God, and yet, again and again in it, we see that he's just pouring out, pouring out a judgment, because they're not walking in his ways, before moving on,

Jeroboam, he establishes religion, and says, this is the God, who brought you out of Egypt, and so much of it reflected, who the real God is, he built these golden bulls, these cows, and he's trying to,

show them some image of strength, and something they could see, tangibly, who God is, but the, one of the problems, with idols, with these things, that are trying to speak, of the strength, the majesty, of who the gods are, or who God is, is that there's, there's nothing that you can build, with your hands, that can adequately depict, the strength, and the might of who God is, and so even as he tried, to help his people, and maybe even compassionately show, tried to give them something, tangible they could see, the problem is that again, he was defining a God, so much more tame, than the God of the Bible, and we've looked at this, in previous weeks, how again and again, as Amos is speaking, his people turn to life, warning them of judgment, he keeps turning their eyes, to who God is, the Lord of armies, the Lord who spoke, the universe into being, the one bigger than, the constellations, all of this stuff, and he's trying to turn their eyes, to who God is, because he knows that, in them seeing, who God really is, and them letting God, define who God is, and them expanding, their vision of his strength, and his might, and his power, his holiness, his justice, and his love and kindness, that there, will be the strength, for their repentance, for their turning from themselves, to turn to the way of life, 2 Corinthians 3,

[17:55] Paul is speaking of the same thing, when he says, and we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed, to the same image, from one degree of glory, to another, for this comes from the Lord, who is the spirit, he's saying that, our transformation from, lives that are, defining life in our own terms, and selfish, and self-focused, and using other people, and living, in that like, fake religion, that feels so much, like the true one, but is of our own making, that we are, we're transformed, we're made whole, as we behold God, with unveiled face, as we see who he really is, and that's, that's what Amos, that's what God through Amos, is seeking to do his people, reveal to him, look, look at who the real God is, see his might, see his power, see his love, see him for who he is, we sang just a few minutes ago, give me eyes, to see more of who you are, may what I behold, still my anxious heart, take what I have known, and break it all apart, you my God, are greater still, I don't know if we always think, about what we're singing, take what I have known, and break it all apart, you my God, are greater still, if you've ever, had something you really believe, and then you find out, that you're wrong, a paradigm shift, you find things you believe, are actually, not the way they are, that is a profoundly, uncomfortable place to be, it's a scary place to be, take what I have known, and break it all apart, you my God, are greater still, those are scary words, to sing, and we can sing them, knowing that God, delights to answer that prayer, we're saying,

God, I have these, understanding of who you are, and a, like a vision of who you are, but it's not complete, it's not accurate, would you change it, would you, would you give me, a paradigm shift, of who you are, that is an incredible, that is a beautiful, that's a necessary thing, to pray, that is a prayer, in one sense, of such safety, of such life, the fullness of life, is found, in knowing God, and so that is an amazing, thing to be praying, but let us realize, that we should not be surprised, that when God begins, to show us through his word, that he's a God, so much bigger, than we understand, so much more holy, so much more just, more severe, more fierce, than we understand, that that is God's answer, to our prayer, in so many ways, but not only, in that do we find, the severity of God, as we look, and wrestle with the reality, of this element, of God's holiness, and his judgment, that is coming, we also find, life and redemption, verse 11, in that day,

I will raise up the booth, of David that has fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it, as in the days of old, that they may possess, the remnant of Edom, and all the nations, who are called by my name, declares the Lord, who does this, with these words, in Amos 9, verse 12, God is beginning to speak, of the reverse, of the curse, he's pronounced on the world, Edom stands for, the various, the various prophets, in the Bible, including Amos, in chapter 1, Edom represents, the nations, the pagan nations, of the earth, and as he speaks, of them repossessing Edom, and Edom coming, to be called by God's name, this is, this is a speaking, of the nations, that have been, doing their own thing, far from God, exploiting the innocent, horrific ways, returning to God, as they were called to be, verse 13, behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the plow man, shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes, who sows the seed, the mountains shall drip, sweet wine, and all the hills, shall flow with it, it's speaking of the reverse, of the curse, on the ground, on the earth, that he's saying that, just as in Genesis 3,

God has pronounced judgment, that the earth will bear, thorns, it will be, like disappointing, frustrating work, to till the land, here God is saying, that the earth, is going to be, abundant crops, reversing the curse, on the land, in verse 14, I will restore, the fortunes, of my people Israel, and

they shall rebuild, the ruined cities, and inhabit them, they shall plant vineyards, and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens, and eat their fruit, this is more than just, the reverse of the curse, of the earth, but this is a restoration, of the people, to harmony, with the ground, with the earth, with the life, as it's supposed to be, back in verse, in chapter 5, Amos had spoken about, how they will build houses, but they will not, get to dwell on them, and they'll plant crops, but not get to, have the crops, and all that, and he's saying, that there's this, the curse is, they're going to feel it, so deeply, in God's judgment, and here he's saying, no you're going to, you're going to have houses, you're going to live, in those houses, you're going to have those vineyards, you're going to drink deeply, of my goodness, of the stuff, he's reversing the curse, in such beautiful ways, and then verse 15,

I will plant them, on their land, and they shall never again, be uprooted, he's been speaking to them, of how they're going to be, removed from the land, and how they're, the land, that God's covenantal promise, that he would bring them, into the promised land, he's bringing them out, because they've broken, they're part of the covenant, but here in this final verse, he's speaking of, restoring them to the land, in a way that they'll never be removed, the security, it's more secure, that their, God's covenant to them, is more secure, than anything they've experienced, as the people of God, not just for them, but for the nations, and the earth, for the remnant, for all who turn to God, for each one of us, now how are these two, verse, how are these two halves, of this chapter combined, how do they even go together, it's almost like whiplash, as you read, of such ferocious judgment, that all of a sudden, God beautifully, not just blessing his people, but blessing all the peoples, of the earth, and reversing the curse, on the peoples, on the nations, on the ground, on them, and their dwelling, well it's actually all found, this is the, it's all found, in that first verse, and then in verse 11, and I saw the Lord, standing beside the altar, and then verse 11, and that day,

[23 : 37] I will raise up the booth of David, the northern kingdom, their false religion, was established, by King Jeroboam, a counterfeit king, standing as a counterfeit priest, by the altar, leaving them in a counterfeit religion, that felt so much, of the right way, but was his own invention, and now Amos sees, the real king of all the earth, who is the only one, who could be the real priest, for all the earth, standing beside the altar, as the king did, at the feast of booth, and in that day, I'll raise up the booth of David, again in verse 11, according to the theologian, Alec Mottier, that this is speaking, of the restoration, of the real king, and the real priest, of God, as their king and priest, and we know, that the fullness, of God as our priest, is found in the cross, that this speaking, of the booth of David, is one of the Davidic prophecies, of who the Messiah will be, and what he will do, and it's so easy, for us to see on the cross, just the love, and the kindness, and the mercy of God, and all that is right, to see in it for sure, but it's easy for us, to miss out on, the seeing the severity, and the wrath of God, on the cross, poured out,

Jesus not only taking, the nails in his hands, but taking the fullness, of the wrath of God, on himself, the fullness, of the separation, the fullness, of the curse, in his own flesh, in his own soul, in his own self, now in 1st John chapter 2, John writes about, about Jesus crucifixion, his death, being propitiation, for our sins, and that's something, that we don't like to talk about, not only because it's a word, that most of us, is bigger than most words, we understand, but because it's a word, that contains the severity, of who God is, Andrew if you can put up, the one slide we have for today, if you got this, propitiation, the turning away of wrath, by an offering, through placating, or satisfying the wrath, of God, this is a term, that some of the pagan nations, would use as well, if you read, they're lit, turning away the wrath, of the gods, by an offering, through placating, or satisfying the wrath, a word that your Bibles, might use in, in first John chapter two, some of the, like the NIV 1984, I think it might, some of the translations, will use the word expiation, more, even more modern editions, of the NIV, and the NLT, use just the word atonement, and those words, are very good words, but they, they don't contain the fullness, of what was being written, and that expiation, refers to the, just removal of guilt, like if you're dirty, and just kind of clean it, like when your table's dirty, and you just clean it off, you've like expiated your table, you've removed the dirt from it, but propitiation, is actually, the removal of guilt, through the taking on, of the wrath, of the judgment, and that's what Jesus, is doing on the cross, he's not just washing us, he's actually taking, the judgment, that we read about here, of God working evil, not good for them, of God, no matter where they run, no matter how high they climb, he's saying right here, as it refers to Mount Carmel, like no matter, what mountain you climb to, no matter what value, you go into,

I'm going to find you, and I'm going to pour out, my judgment upon you, that severity, of the judgment, that we deserve, because we've broken, God's holy ways, each one of us, each one of us, have invented, our own rules for life, each one of us, has violated, God's pure and holy way, and Amos, even more so God, in these words, is speaking words, that are dripping, of love and mercy, as he speaks to them, of the coming judgment, you see if standing here today, if I knew that there were, some very hungry lions, outside of here, maybe a few hungry alligators, as well outside of this building, and I knew that, and they were looking, for human flesh, and yet I just came here, and I just spoke, of all the happy things, and just told you, about the beautiful elements, of life, and all the stuff, and you felt so good, about yourself, and then you step outside, these doors, and just boom, a lion ate you, and I knew that, I'd actually be, be hating you, through my positive, warm and fuzzies, you guys with me, I'd be hating you, through my positive, warm and fuzzies, and God, in his justice, and in his love, is warning the people, page after page, in the book of Amos, and through the scriptures, warning, not just the people of Israel, many years ago, but us today, that if we continue, to live life, on our own terms, no matter how much, it reflects, no matter how much, it smells like, the real religion, no matter how much, we invoke God's name, no matter how much, we do right sacrifice, and sing the right songs, and tithe, maybe you tithe, more than 10%, you're just, you're an all star, maybe you're so involved, in the church, and everyone, just respects you so much, but if you haven't, actually turned, to God, looking to Jesus, for forgiveness, looking to him, for his propitiation, for you, and you haven't, yielded your life, to him, you haven't, yielded your life, to him, and said,

God enough of life, on my own terms, my life belongs to you, then something, much worse, than a lion, right outside this building, is awaiting you, and it's the judgment, of God, but the beautiful, thing right here, is that in the warning, of God's judgment, is an invitation, to life, that God, has actually taken, in the fullness, of the judgment, that awaits, every one of us, in himself, two thousand years ago, in real time, real history, through the real death, of his real body, Jesus' real body, and through the real resurrection, of him, who still lives today, every single one of us, can share, in the fullness of life, that's found in God, that Jesus took the doom, that you and I deserved, so that we can share, in the destiny, that he deserved, that we can live, in the fullness of life, and so for all the words, and all the images, and all the stuff, we've seen of who God is, through these words, I think the most beautiful, are the very final words, of Amos, after all that God, has spoken to them, of how far they've strayed, from him, and how much they have, perverted his ways, the very final words are, says the Lord, your God,

God is speaking, to a people, who have perverted his ways, who define God, in their own terms, who've exploited the poor, who've trampled on the innocent, and despite all of that, he still defines himself, as the Lord, your God, the, for, the book of Amos, has expanded our vision, of God's might, and his strength, and his holiness, and his transcendence, and yet, we see how, how intimately close, God is, he still calls himself, attached to our, to us, we spoke some weeks ago, of that like, of the image, of knowing so much, about God, but not knowing him, and we called, all of us, to plead with God, God I want to know you, I want to know you, I want to know you, like the prodigal son, who strayed so far from him, and he's, and he's practicing his speech, and for it, to share with the father, who he's trampled, and cited his name, he's practicing his speech, all the things, he'll try to say, to impress him, and then the father, sees him, and he's running toward him, the son starts saying his words, but then the father, he interrupts his speech, if you go read, read the prodigal son, you'll see that the father, just interrupts the apology, doesn't even wait, for all the words, and just embraces him, and I shared with you, some weeks ago, of being in high school, and just being on my knees there, being like God,

[30 : 57] I need to know you, I didn't even understand, the fierceness of God, I didn't understand, so much of who he is, but I just knew that, I wasn't satisfied, with my pastor, knowing the beauty, and the awe, of who God was, I needed to know that myself, not just know about him, and so I shared with you, I was there, as a 16 year old, God I need to know you, not just know about you, I shared that seeking him, and encouraged us, to pray that same prayer, God let us not just know about you, let us know you, it was a prayer, so much bigger than I understood, yet so much more awesome, than I even realized, but as we see here, God again and again, speaking to them, of who they are, and saying, I am the Lord your God, God saying, I am right here, right with you, I am here present with you, this majestic, amazing, powerful, fierce, loving, kind, merciful God, he is right here, as our God, the God of the people, he has made, whether we are, are giving him the middle finger, with our lifestyle, or we are seeking after him, he is right here, ready to embrace us, like the

Father, the prodigal son, didn't realize, even as he was practicing, that speech, and even before that, as he was, as he was just living, a crazy wild life, for himself, the Father was out, searching for him, looking for him, and so if you are someone, who hasn't yielded, your life to God, if you find that maybe, maybe your life, looks very Christian, but you have been, defining God, and life in your own terms,

I just want to plead with you, don't wait another day, actually just God, just pray today, God, forgive me, thank you, that you've taken, the judgment I deserve, I'm yours, here's my life, not just my Sunday mornings, not just my prayers, and liturgy, but here's my life, my life is for you, just pray, something like that, God, I want to know you, would you stand with me, heavenly father, through the pages, of your sacred book, through the words of Amos, your words, we have seen, so much more of who you are, than at least, than I expected to see, seeing you, as the one who roars, seeing you, as the one who's so holy, who cares about, the details of our lives, Lord, I pray, and together we pray, what we sang earlier today, give us eyes, to see more of who you are, may what I behold, still my anxious heart, take what I have known, and break it all apart, you my God, are greater still, would you help us all, with unveiled face, behold the glory, of who you are, would you help us, to come to know you, not just our favorite parts, of who you are, but really who you are, would you save us, from ourselves, and from living life, on our own terms, and would you help us, to live a life, in every part of our life, our money, our time, our friendships, our work, our sexuality, and our worship, be shaped, and defined, by the fullness, of who you are, thank you, that you have poured out, the judgment we deserve, on your son, that Jesus, you've taken, what we deserve, in your own flesh, that we might share, in the abundant life, that you've won for us, would you be our joy, and our strength, as we yield our life to you, in Jesus name, amen.