

The Untameable God Roars

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we come before your word. Father, your word talks of people that we don't really know, of countries that we no longer know. Father, we know that it was written almost 3,000 years ago, and it can be hard for us to enter into it.

And Father, for some of us who are just familiar with certain parts of the New Testament, this part of the Bible sounds very strange and odd to us. We ask, Father, that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and humble and quieten our hearts so that we might hear your word, that your word might enter deep within who we are and there bear much fruit in our daily lives to your great glory and the furtherance of your kingdom.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. When I first, sorry, I felt that God was calling us to look at the book of Amos during the summer every year at Church of the Messiah.

We like to take at least some of the teaching from the Old Testament. It's really helpful, I think, for Christians to have the pastor or other speakers go through an Old Testament book to help us to try to read things which are very strange.

And I don't know how many of you are aware of this, but there's part of the book of Amos, not the part that we're going to look at particularly today, but from a literary point of view, actually sort of in some ways the turning point or the key foundational text of the whole book of Amos played a very important role in the history of the United States of America.

[1 : 4 3] Andrew's going to be getting things set up on the screen right now as I speak because in a moment I'm going to show you a film clip. Those of you who are used to HD, this was something filmed in 1963, and Martin Luther King was part of a leadership team that called for a march on Washington in 1963 to address the persistent racism and segregation of the United States of America.

And at the end of that famous march on Washington, he gave his famous I Have a Dream speech. And at the very center of the I Have a Dream speech is a quote from the book of Amos, which is part of the theological center of the book, and it gives us, in fact, the name for our sermon series.

So we can't play the whole clip. We're going to play a little bit of the clip, which quotes from Amos. So off you go, Andrew. We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, when will you be satisfied? We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.

We can never be satisfied. As long as our body is heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

[3 : 1 1] We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one.

We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating for whites only.

We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote, and the Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream. We're not going to look at that text today.

[4 : 22] I think it's going to be Daniel in a couple of weeks who's going to exposit that, but it's at the center of the book and the center of the theological understanding of the book of Amos. It's really interesting that in 1963, when there was still no integration in many parts of the United States, still segregation, that in this historic speech in Washington underneath the Lincoln Memorial, they had the Lincoln Memorial just behind them, that in calling people to address these evils and in a sense to have the moral weight and moral certainty and moral courage to address these evils.

He goes to the book of Amos. And so, you know, when Nora was reading the book of Amos, it might have sounded, where on earth is George going to go with a text like this? But to understand that this book has this moral weight that inspired this profound movement of nonviolence in the United States to try to start to address some historic evils that have been going on for hundreds of years.

Well, let's look and see if we can have a bit of a glimpse of this moral weight and moral authority that can lead to such changes and such courage. So if you would just read with me, let's look how it begins.

It's Amos. It's a hard book to find. It's a short little prophet book towards the end of the Old Testament, just before the New Testament. And here's how it begins. Verse 1.

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

[6 : 15] And over the next few weeks, we'll talk a little bit about the distinction of Judah and Israel. I'm not going to say anything about it right now, or very little about it right now. Just to let you know that one of the things which is really curious about this text, I'm not going to say anything about it other than point it out to you.

He sees the words. I mean, the words are spoken, but he sees them. Isn't that an odd thing? I don't know what it means, but I thought I should show you. Look at that. The words of Amos, which he saw.

I think that's just cool. I don't know what else it means. It's just cool. And Amos prophesied, when he mentions the two kings, they were both two kings who had a very, very, very, very long rule.

Sort of imagine Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth of the North and Queen Elizabeth of the South with a little bit of an overlap between the two of them. And so he wrote somewhere between the time 793 B.C., in other words, 793 years before the birth of Christ, and 739 B.C.

And one other thing for you to note just before we go on. Amos is going to be pronouncing these oracles, and an oracle is as if God speaks, but he uses someone's mouth.

[7 : 34] So it would be as if God used Daniel here to speak an oracle, it would be God speaking, but he uses Daniel's mouth, Daniel to speak it.

And there's a series of eight oracles, which make up chapter 1 and chapter 2. Six of them are about the pagan nations outside of Israel, and two of them are about the northern and southern kingdom of Israel.

And I'm going to look at the six oracles to the pagan nations. And so Amos tells us that he's saying these things sometime between 793 and sometime between that and 739.

Let's just say for sake of arguments around 750. One thing for you to remember is in 722, Israel ceased to exist as a nation. That sometime in the 720s, in other words, sometime maybe a decade after Amos prophesied, the Assyrian empire entered into this area.

All of the nations that are mentioned are completely and utterly defeated militarily, some of them never to recover, and some to recover but in a very weakened state. And the nation of Israel itself is defeated by Assyria.

[8 : 44] The ten tribes that are resident there are carried into exile, and they are lost from history. They disappear. So depending on how you date it, somewhere between 15 and 50 years after Amos speaks these words, the nations will all fall that he mentions.

So let's read verses 2 to 5. And he said, The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem.

The pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers. Thus says the Lord, For three transgressions of Damascus and for four, I will not revoke the punishment.

Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron, so I will send fire upon the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-Hadad.

I will break the gate bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitants from the valley of Avon, and him who holds the scepter from Beth Eden and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir, says the Lord.

[10 : 02] And just sort of pause here for a second. And I'm going to spend a little bit of time just in this first five verses, or the first couple of verses, because as you'll see, there's a rhythm throughout all of the six, in fact, all of the eight oracles, two of which Daniel will look at with you next Sunday.

But there's this rhythm for three, for four. I will send fire. I will devour. Thus says the Lord. There's this rhythm. So let's just sort of begin with this.

And here's the first point, if you could put it up, that would be very helpful. The true, real, living, untamed, nation-judging God roars.

This is the introduction to the whole book. The whole book. What's one of the things that can help Martin Luther King stare down the police in places like Alabama and Mississippi is he's gripped with the notion that there is a God who exists who is bigger than the United States of America.

He is untamed by human institutions. He is true. He is real. He is living.

[11 : 22] He is untamed. He judges every nation, every human institution, every social structure. And this God roars.

At this time, for a lot of Canadians, the glow of Martin Luther King's speech starts to fade. Just this past week, as I'm working on the book of Amos, I overheard that God sent two pairs of people to sit right beside me to talk.

And in both cases, in one case it was two men, and in another case it was two women. And one person was giving advice to the other. And their conversation was very Canadian and very spiritual, not religious.

And I'm not saying this to mock. I'm just saying it to describe. And obviously that one person was in some type of trouble and the other person was giving them advice that they had to become more spiritual.

They had to know that they had to walk on their own spiritual path. And that spiritual path meant leaving these other people behind. And they had to stop being concerned about these other people because they had to get in touch with their own spiritual nature.

[12 : 32] They had to get in touch with their own spiritual power and their own spiritual value and walk their own spiritual path. Even if that means leaving all these other people behind and just completely ignoring the complaints that they have about them, they needed to get in touch with their spiritual center, their spiritual power, their spiritual path.

And it's very Canadian. And we breathe that Canadian spiritual cultural air. We breathe it every day. We breathe it when we watch TV and we watch Netflix.

We breathe it probably even when sports commentators comment. We breathe it in the newspapers. We breathe it when we hear about the decisions of governments. We breathe it when we go to school. We breathe it when we go to work in the bureaucracy and even in many businesses and companies.

It is the spiritual air. It is the cultural air that we breathe that people are to get in touch with their spiritual nature, their spiritual path, to walk their spiritual path, to touch their spiritual values.

And it's a very, very comforting type of thing. And here in a country which that is very common, if you said that at a particular party, I mean, some people might be bored.

[13 : 41] Some people might roll their eyes, but nobody would insult you probably. Maybe Christopher Hitchens, if he was still alive in there, he would insult you. But apart from odd atheists like him, it would just come with knowing nods.

And then here you come, what, a kilometer from Parliament Hill, half a kilometer from the entertainment and bar center of the city of Ottawa, half a kilometer from the University of Ottawa.

And we read a text, and at the heart of that text is this profound theological claim that there is a true God. There is a real God.

There is a God who actually is alive. And he is completely and utterly untamed and untameable. He can never, ever be domesticated by any human being, by any institution, by any nation.

He is completely impossible to domesticate or tame. And he's real, and he's live, and he's true, and he judges, even nations, even the Supreme Court of Canada, even the Parliament, the Senate, the Premier, the Mayor, Apple, Google, GM, he judges.

[14 : 58] and he roars. And it is very un-Canadian. Let me tell you one other thing about this.

I'm not going to argue for it, by the way. I'm just going to give you a bit of an analogy about it. And I'm going to say, at the end of the day, I mean, for many Canadians, they would just say, well, that's one of the reasons I don't read the Bible. Thank you very much, and off you go.

But, I mean, the argument for why this is true is partially the fact that the prophecies are fulfilled. At the end of the day, I would have to talk about the overall narrative of the Bible, the wisdom, and the insight of the Bible.

I would maybe have to talk a little bit about why it is that the type of spiritual, not religious talk that I overheard in Starbucks could not lead you to stare down troopers in Alabama and Mississippi and change systemic, century-old evil.

It has no power to do that. Never has and never will. At the end of the day, I'd have to talk about arguments for God and finally, ultimately, the fact of Jesus and his death and resurrection.

[16 : 11] But let me tell you this. Before I was married to Louise, I imagined what my perfect girlfriend and wife would be like.

and my imaginary perfect girlfriend never told me that I was doing something wrong, never commented negatively about how I was dressed, how I cut my hair, how I spent my time, how I should spend my time, how I should speak to her.

My imaginary ideal girlfriend and wife never talked like that. And then I met Louise. And let me tell you, her account of the distance between whatever her imaginary husband and me, that would be vastly different.

I have way more to repent of than she does. But don't you think that much of the spiritual, not religious, contemporary talk about religion, spirituality in Canada is exactly like imaginary girlfriends and boyfriends.

Real people are annoyingly angular until you learn to love them and you have to love them in their angularity.

[17 : 32] In fact, what I'm going to suggest is the God who's described in the Bible is vastly more likely to be real than the way we talk about spirituality and religion in Canada and is well worth our considered opinion.

Especially after a clip like that and Martin Luther King. I believe the Bible is true.

And I believe that the God who really does exist, who's revealed in the words of Scripture and is ultimately revealed most perfectly in Jesus and his death upon the cross and mighty resurrection, that he is the real and true God.

The true, real, living, untamed, nation, judging God that roars. And I've had several people over this week tell me that they've tried to study the book of Amos and it just seems to be the same week in and week out and so they never finished it.

And it might very well be that we will come to the conclusion that the book of Amos keeps banging the same note like a drum. But I want to suggest to you that contemporary Canadians need to spend ten weeks meditating upon the fact that the God that really does exist is true and living and real and untamed and nation-judging.

[18 : 51] And that if all we do is hear that for ten consecutive weeks it is probably very important for our souls. And probably very important for our nation. And if you get nothing else out of it, if that's all you get and you are confronted to meditate upon that, then God has done a mighty thing in our midst.

Now I want to tell, I don't know if there's any people who are here today who are not a follower of Jesus and maybe have been dragged here because of a family member or maybe you're here because you're on a search.

I want to tell you a secret about Christians in Canada. I want to tell you a secret about most of your Christian friends. most of your Christian friends suffer under the belief that God is small and people are big.

God is small and their boss is big. God is small and their money is big. God is small and the Supreme Court of Canada is big. God is small and Hollywood is big. And most of your Christian friends suffer from that basic belief.

And the book of Amos here is going to challenge that. Listen to it again. The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem. The pastures of the shepherds mourn and the top of Carmel withers.

[20 : 15] This is an image of the, it's an image of north to south and it's an image, it's as if I in Canada said from the hunters in the high Arctic to the penthouses on Bay Street.

from the street people in Victoria to the richest people in Bridal Path area of Toronto.

And he uses an image of high to low as well. He uses the image of from the river valleys to the highest places on the highest tree line in the mountains.

The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem. The pastures of the shepherds mourn and the top of Carmel withers. Thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke the punishment because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

So I will send, I will send fire upon the house of Hazael and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-Hadad. I will break the gate bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitants from the valley of Avon and him who holds the scepter sign of ruling from Beth Eden and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir says the Lord.

[21 : 34] Here's the next point. If you could put it up, Andrew, that would be great. The Lord roars. I live as if Canada and its institutions are big and God is small. Pray for me.

Pray for each other. It is a persistent, pervasive illness for North American Christians. Our God is too small and people and problems are too big.

We live as if the only option before us is to tower ourselves or to cower under others. And once we are gripped with the idea that the living, true, real, untamed nation judging God roars, we can begin to understand that there is a completely different option and that is to be the servant of the Most High King.

Do you put up the next point? Really, in some ways, the whole part of the sermon is to try to bring us to these first two points and prayers that are going to follow from them. But we need to go through the text because there's really something very important in here.

Dear Lord, please make me a disciple of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, growing in a humble, trusting, knowing that you are big and everything human is small or everything created is small.

[22 : 58] That is a prayer for the rest of your life. It's a prayer to pray every day. And if you don't have time to write these down, they're always on the webpage within a day or two if you want to write them down and use them in your prayer life.

But some people might say, isn't this passage offensive? Here we have a Jewish guy from Judah, southern kingdom, and he's judging other people groups by Jewish standards.

Like, what gives him the right to judge Edomites as to how they should live? What gives him the right to talk to Damascus? They have their own values. Like, isn't this a multicultural world? Shouldn't we value tolerance?

Aren't morals just relative? How dare... Okay, George, you sort of caught us up with some of your rhetoric, but how dare there be a guy from Judah imposing Jewish standards on these six surrounding pagan nations?

They have their own gods. They have their own metanarrative. They have their own story. And, George, all the smartest and brightest people in Canada know that morals are relative, that there's nothing inherently absolute.

[24 : 05] Like, George, this is a deeply offensive text to Canada. Well, all I'd like to say is, do you still want to maintain that when you see the sins that Amos accuses the six nations of?

Like, let's look here again at verse 3. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Damascus and for four, I will not revoke the punishment. Why? Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

It's an image that they use an iron device to take an entire people group and go over them and over them and over them and over them until they are completely, utterly, completely destroyed.

He's condemning genocide. You're fine with that? In smug Canada? You're fine with genocide? You have nothing to say about what goes on about that?

Is genocide just a figment of the imagination, a moral oddity about some guy from the southern kingdom of Judah? He condemns the nation for genocide.

[25 : 28] Here's the third point. Could you put it up, Andrew, please? The Lord roars. There are some things that human beings cannot not know.

Despite all of the glib talk of a certain form of multiculturalism and a glib talk of a certain form of tolerance and the glib talk of certain forms of moral relativism, the Bible here is going to maintain and all the way through the book of Amos that there are some truths, some things that human beings cannot not know.

There is never a justification for a complete annihilation of a people group. One of the things that people wonder about is the Bible on slavery.

Do you know that the next two condemnations are about slavery? In fact, it's a condemnation of slavery in a remarkably complete way. It's not immediately obvious in the English, but if you look at it very carefully, it's even more obvious in the Hebrew, but even in the English, if you look at it very carefully, you'll see that the next thing that is condemned is two aspects of the institution of slavery and is completely and utterly condemned.

Is slavery all right? Let's read it. Verses 6 to 8. For thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Gaza and for four, this is a condemnation of the Philistine people.

[27 : 04] For three transgressions of Gaza and for four, I will not revoke the punishment because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom. They were the ones who went and captured a whole people for the purpose of making them slaves and took them to the slave market where they could be sold.

This is condemned by Amos in a cult, in a world that viewed slavery as normal. The Bible condemns it 750 years before the birth of Jesus, before Plato, before Aristotle, before Socrates.

So I will send a fire upon the walls of Gaza and it shall devour her strongholds. I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod and him who holds the scepter from Ashkelon.

I will turn my hand against Ekron and the remnant of the Philistine shall perish, says the Lord God. And then he captures the next part. Some people might say, well, I'm just an ordinary businessman.

I'm just trying to make a living. It's not my fault that they come and dump all these slaves with me. I'm just trying to provide a market. I'm just trying to provide a service. It's just business. Business is neutral.

[28 : 24] Excuse me. Before we read the next part, could you put up the next point, Andrew? The Lord roars.

There is a real moral order that despite being imperfectly known, forgotten, twisted, and repressed, it is still present enough for God to judge us.

Listen to verses 9 and 10. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Tyre and for four, I will not revoke the punishment because they delivered up a whole people to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.

So I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre and it shall devour her strongholds. And when you put the parts together, the Syrians capture people to make them slaves.

They don't know how to sell them. They sell them through Edom. Edom sells them as slaves. The Lord roars.

[29 : 31] There is a real moral order that despite being imperfectly known, forgotten, parts of it, parts of it twisted, parts of it repressed, it is still present enough for God to judge us.

Imagine for a second that they were able to take a human being, like in a test tube, they were able to develop something like DNA and they were able to make a human being in a machine and, you know, whatever it is, a little while later out pops this fully functioning human being.

But then you actually spend time with a human being and you discover that the human being has no conscience at all. Like, by no conscience I mean it's like a snake. Snakes have no conscience, it's just an animal.

When it's hungry, it hunts and eats. After it's eaten, it stops. If somebody threatens it, it fights back, otherwise it just sleeps. Would we say, even if it had everything about us as human beings, it looked like a human being and everything like that is completely and it's real, if you cut it, it's not like a machine, like it's real.

But would you say that something that looks like a human being manufactured out of a test tube that had no conscience was human? And if you think about it for a second, one of the problems with the Turing test about machines having consciousness is there's, I believe, no conscience aspect of it.

[30 : 54] Can there be a human mind without conscience? Would you call a mind without conscience a human mind? The Bible says that having a conscience is part of the image of God in us.

And even though our consciences can be repressed and parts of it repressed and parts of it twisted and parts of it inflamed unnaturally and parts of it just all messed up, that every human being, this is the message of Romans 1 and Romans 2, that every human being retains enough of a conscience that God in complete and utter justice can judge us.

In fact, the horrible thing on one hand from the book of Romans chapter 2 is that Paul maintains that even if all God did was take your moral order, no matter how twisted or whatever it is and no matter how much repressed, the moral order that you're conscious of and that you use in your own life, and if he used that to judge you, you would fail and he would be right in judging you.

You know, to our glib Canadians who are enticed by spiritual, not religious and all things being relative, what about racism? The hatred of any people group, not just racism, but hating men because they're men or women because they're women or a particular ethnic group because they're ethnic.

Isn't that a human problem and isn't it viewed not just as ethnocentrism but as something fundamental that we should reject? But Amos rejects it.

[32 : 35] In fact, I would suggest that it's only ultimately in the biblical worldview that you can have a true rejection of racism because racism, you know, if you have, in our modern narrative, our modern story, you know, that first everything, you know, whatever the initial bit of life came together completely and utterly by chance and then natural selection means that eventually we go from having apes and gorillas to human beings, therefore don't be prejudiced.

That doesn't follow. That's incoherent. It makes absolutely no sense. Our culture's hatred of racism is an echo of an echo of an echo of an echo of the story of the Bible and the teaching of books like Amos that teaches there is but one God who's created all human beings and all human beings equally bear the image of God and all human beings equally bearing the image of God have a conscience, a reflection of the moral order even if imperfectly known after the fall.

And there is but one God and but one created human race made male and female, two genders, not 70. And the book of Amos is going to condemn racism at its heart.

Read along with me here in verses 11 and 12. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke the punishment because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity and his anger tore perpetually and he kept his wrath forever.

So I will send a fire upon Timan and it shall devour the strongholds of Basra. I mean there's not only here a strong condemnation of anger but isn't that the very heart of racism?

[34 : 27] Like even just within this past week or two the president the head of the Palestine group I think centered in Gaza continuing to pass on this libelous assault on Jewish people of poisoning wells.

a lie of hatred against the Jewish people that has gone on for centuries and centuries and is used to fuel and inflame hatred.

And the Bible here condemns all hatred of people groups as people groups. All of our social and other means by which we nourish a hatred of entire people groups.

we feed it we justify it we rationalize it we inflame it and the Bible condemns it. The Bible condemns it. The Lord roars if you could put up the next point Andrew the Lord roars he is holy good and wholly opposed to evil.

The Lord roars he is holy he is good and he is wholly opposed to evil. I have to confess that there is a on the Christian radio show here in Ottawa on Sunday afternoons they play the same one hour show over and over again I think from about one o'clock till seven and I every time I listen to it for longer than a couple of minutes I get so angry I have to spend time in repentance and I know that for some people this may be very very helpful I hear true confessions John Maxwell who is one of these power of positive thinking I have a very soft spot in my heart for John Maxwell his writings at a certain point in time in my life were tremendously tremendously tremendously helpful but I think even John Maxwell would acknowledge if you only read John Maxwell you are going to starve yourself you will poison yourself and encouragement constant encouragement without any discussion of the holiness of God and any call to repentance it might be very good for a very brief season but it's spiritually profoundly dangerous we live in a culture where not all praise songs are like this and I'm not dumping on praise songs

[36 : 47] I love praise songs we go a whole other thing you know the favorite song of this church you know before I came here was the words of that poem what is it Andrew and did in England's that you know England's fields green did Jesus really walk no he didn't stop singing the song he didn't walk around England's green and verdant fields England isn't Israel get over it it's in the hymn book in the Anglican hymn book well beloved but there is a common problem of Jesus is my girlfriend songs you can't sing Jesus is my girlfriend songs if it never means you have to wrestle with the fact that the God who really does exist is untamed nation judging he is holy he is holy good and he is holy opposed to evil let's read verses 13 to 15 we're almost coming to an end of the text thus says the Lord for three transgressions of the

Ammonites and for four I will not revoke the punishment because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead that they might enlarge their border so I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabah and it shall devour her strongholds with shouting in the day of battle and with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind and their king shall go into exile he and his princes together says the Lord because they ripped open pregnant women in Gilead that they might enlarge their border enter the next point the Lord roars he is judging every human being institution and social structure he is judging every human being institution and social structure I know a woman who had an abortion so she would look good in her wedding dress not making it up so she had the abortion she wanted to look good in her wedding dress on her wedding day human beings regularly attack the weakest and the vulnerable because of their ambitions whether it's an ambition to take more territory or to look good in a bikini or ambitions because as a guy you want to travel and you want to do things you don't want to have to be encumbered by a girlfriend whom you made pregnant the first time I ever spoke on

Parliament Hill at the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship I thought to myself I've seen many people come and go in places like this and what they do is they try to preach a sermon that people will like so they get invited back and the irony is that they usually don't get invited back so I prayed about it and I thought I will preach so that if I only get one shot on Parliament Hill and I never get invited back and so I preached on the fact that we have to fear God and that on Parliament Hill you have to understand that you're under judgment that God will judge you funnily enough they've invited me back now for 19 years go figure but that wasn't actually my plan my plan was that I might only get one shot and so I was going to give it to them because it would be not because I was going to give it to them because you know how would it be if at the judgment seat God said to me George you had a chance to warn those guys because you wanted them to like you because you're a people pleaser and even now I worried about whether I should make a reference to abortion in case it offends people

I confess I am very very very very very deeply Canadian but the text here speaks very clearly to political ambition economic ambition and personal ambition and the way we will victimize the weakest the great worry amongst many of the law that's now in Canada that allows doctors to kill people is what happens if in 20 years I'm fading and my kids would like to go on a cruise and it would be a lot easier if I died before they went and if you think this is completely obscene or completely unrealistic just read what's gone on in the Netherlands and in Belgium the weakest get in the way of our ambition some of you are saying

George this has been too much just the one final text just so we can and then we'll start to wrap it up in a very important way you know in our warfare nobody in our modern world I think in our warfare thinks that we can send people to hell by defeating them but in the ancient world they thought that and that's at the heart one aspect of the heart of this final condemnation not that they're able to do it but they thought they could do it and because they thought they could do it they did it look at chapter 2 verses 1 to 3 thus says they believed in that particular culture that if you were to completely annihilate the body in such a way it would mean that his existence in the afterlife became fraught became endangered that in a sense he could wander and be he would not have a good death he would dwell in a terrible place after death and it also had the ability of destroying the traditions of the country so it both destroys their past and destroys the future and in a sense by doing it to the king who's understood to be a representative of the whole people in some ways they're saying we are going to cast all of you as a nation we're not only going to defeat you militarily we're going to send you to hell and it's condemned here in the

[43 : 15] Bible the Lord roars enter the final one the Lord roars in mercy this might not be originally mainly obvious the Lord roars in mercy you know the thing about this text is this text is written somewhere between 15 to 30 years before Assyria invades these nations and these nations are destroyed it's the complete opposite of a terrorist attack I was on Thursday I was going to have lunch with somebody in the church and so I was walking on Laurier bridge right by the D&D; and virtually every time I walk by D&D; I think to myself is this the day that a terrorist will set off a bomb at D&D; headquarters while I'm walking by I know I have a very odd imagination but I think about that and you know the way terrorists work is the bomb goes off and then they roar the Lord roars 10 15 20 30 years later the judgment comes he roars so we can repent in fact even within this text you might notice that there's something that seems to mean that there's have no mercy for some of you maybe who've had an abortion and I've made you feel very guilty and you think to yourself

George this is very hard I can't undo an abortion I can't undo the fact that I encouraged a person to have an abortion or that I drove them I can't undo any of those types of things and it's even made worse in the text because what does it say time after time every one of these places I will not revoke I will not revoke I will not revoke I will not revoke I will not revoke it says it time and time and time again I will not revoke the punishment I will not revoke the punishment I will not revoke the punishment how could God revoke punishment for such evil and still be just see one of the things we have to understand about this text of the Bible is that it all comes before the cross and what the Old Testament is doing is it's setting in light within us not only an awareness of right and wrong but in a sense the spiritual quandary that we need to come to the point that we realize that God has to do something and it's hard for us to imagine what God could do we ourselves every single one of us here as the book of

Amos goes on it's going to talk about how we treat the weak and how we treat the poor and how we do how we misuse religion and how we misuse spirituality every single one of us will be confronted in some ways and in every single case how could God revoke the punishment of the cross is that 750 years 800 years after this there will be a pagan king and there will be a pagan empire and they believe that they can stop a people movement by killing its representative in such a shameful way that the people movement will come to an end and if they deal with the representative they have dealt with the people movement and they hung him upon a cross as their representative and as yours mine and three days later he rose God does not revoke my punishment and he does not revoke yours but he sends his son he himself bears the punishment that you and I deserve he takes that in his person as my substitute and exchanges with me when I put my faith and trust in him his perfect righteousness and standing with the father my evil is not revoked in my place condemned he stood in my place condemned he stood the book of

Ezekiel says God takes no delight in the death of a sinner but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live and 1 John chapter 2 verses 1 and 2 says my little children I am writing these things to you that you may not sin but if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous he is the propitiation for our but also for the sins of the whole world for Moabites and Edomites and Syrians and Assyrians and Philistines and Phoenicians Andrew if you could put up the first of the three concluding prayers remember I said that the Lord roars in mercy here's the prayer that we can respond dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel humbly growing in gratitude that in my place condemned he stood friend if you are here and you have not given your life to

Jesus you need to understand what he did for you on the cross if you have had an abortion if you have counseled for abortion if you work in an abortion clinic and you are here today there's nothing you can do that is better you can't undo what you did but you and he stood and bore the punishment that you deserved there's grace and there's mercy and there's another thing in here which is really important if you could put up the next prayer Andrew remember I told you that maybe this prophecy might have been written in 752 and in 722 Assyria invades and Israel is destroyed and the Lord roars in mercy and the hope that people will repent here's a problem for us let's just be honest for a second I live in an instant society if all of a sudden you had to go back to use computers that were around in 1995 and you turn the computer on and you have enough time to go and make yourself a cup of coffee to come back before it booted up nobody would use that computer today

[49 : 44] Starbucks now has an app that if I order my coffee at the office and I indicate that I'm walking it tracks my movement so that when I get to Starbucks I don't have to wait in line I can go and get my coffee right away we live in an instant society how many of us possibly could understand the call to pray for somebody or something for 10 20 30 years without falling into despair without falling into cynicism without falling into just complete and utter laziness and hopelessness and this passage of scripture is a profound call for us to call out to God that he would teach us and help us to pray for our nation or for people or for social structures or for social evils that might call us to pray for 30 years without being cynical without being hopeless dear Lord please make me a disciple of

Jesus gripped by the gospel growing in the habit of daily uncynical non despairing persistent decades long prayer and the final thing if you could just put it up Andrew if I I'd like you all to stand no you can pray for those things you don't have to worry about how hard it is that's why I had the Holy Spirit dear Lord please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel growing in my fight against the evil I do and the evil in the world that's what this call is Martin Luther King he looked at centuries centuries of oppression and he said I'm not going to surrender to this some evil needs to be resisted and resist and resisted resisted we live in a culture of death that is growing many of us believe the culture of death is bigger than God what can we do against the institutional elites the educational elites the Hollywood elites the artistic elites the government elites the business elites what can we do against them they're all too big no

God is bigger he calls us to resist evil and not only resist the evil but for those of us who struggle maybe it's with pornography maybe it's with an angry temper maybe it's with greed maybe it's with gluttony whatever it is that we come to God and say I will not surrender to this I will not view this as normal I will be gripped by the gospel gratitude for what you have done for me on the cross and I will continue to repent and I will continue to call out in prayer and do what I can to stop the institutional and social structural evil of the world let's bow our heads in prayer father we thank you for these powerful words of Amos father we come to you again we said it early on the prayer but we confess before you father it seems father as if it's our natural default to think that you are small and that these other things and these problems in our lives that they are too big father we ask that your holy spirit would do a mighty work in our lives that you would grip us with the gospel that you would grip us with the scriptures that you would grip us father to grow day by day and a growing knowledge that you are big and everything created everything human is small that you would grow within us an ever deeper father trust and belief in this father we call out to you to do it in our lives as individuals and as a church and we ask this in the name of

Jesus your son and our savior amen