

Rev. Seth D. Bode † 04-15-2022 † Good Friday

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

Amos 4

¹² Therefore, this is what I will do to you, Israel.

Yes, this is what I will do to you: Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!

¹³ Indeed, he who forms mountains and who creates wind,

who declares his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn into darkness,

and who treads down the high places of the earth,

the LORD, the God of Armies, is his name.



I recently spoke to a fellow pastor whose birthday is April 15. It was noteworthy, he said, that April 15 is littered with tragedies. On April 15 ...

- Lincoln died,
- the Titanic sank,
- the Boston Marathon was bombed, and
- Notre Dame caught on fire.

He said, “My close friends always remind me that my birth fits right in to all those other tragedies.” I had this pastor friend at a low point, so I told him instead, “Your birth was meant to put some balance into April 15. Now we can all say that something good happens on April 15.”

Of course, we arrive to the cross of Christ with a similar mix of feelings. We would have loved to spare Him this sacrifice, if only we could truly love Him enough. But instead we indulged in our sin, and it led to this. The only-begotten Son, bound to our sins, bound to us in love, and bound by love and holy obedience to His cross—our cross.

Jesus of Nazareth is no longer passing by the crowds, to be hailed at will for healing. Jesus of Nazareth is no longer riding on to His chosen fate, for us, to be greeted with palm fronds and accolades. Jesus of Nazareth is right before us, face-to-face, immersed in OUR sins, about to drown in the overcoming judgment and disgust of His Father. He who should not die, is sentenced to the torture and ridicule of the cross. He who could not die, is in the depths of our deepest loss.

He who was at the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. One day this same Son of God who was slain on the cross, you will meet face-to-face. Are you prepared to do this? Are you ready for His holy gaze? Have you taken hold of His cross and hugged it with faith? Or do you deny it, resist it in doubt, and act ashamed of it?

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD

Our text is in Amos. One hardship Amos had to bear was the task of proclaiming divine law and indictment to a wicked, impenitent nation. Amos, the man, may be the most forceful preacher of repentance and judgment among all the prophets of the Old Testament. Stern, fearless, self-contained, carved right out of granite, this prophet possessed great spiritual gifts of rhetoric, oration, public speaking. A rustic in the big city, Amos used brief sentences, indulged in questions and exclamations, and he understood the power of repetition. His book is predominantly threats and punishments. Why? This was a time of spiritual decay.

Amos does not say it lightly, "*Prepare to meet your God.*" Amos began with neighboring nations, explaining how dark and how wicked they were. He spiraled inward from evil nation to evil nation until He came to His own people. Then Amos said sarcastically, "*Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin even more*" (4:4). In a series of installments, Amos said, "*Yet you have not returned to me.*" God gave them empty stomachs, but they have not returned to Him. People were left thirsty, but they have not returned to Him. People were plagued with locusts and food shortages, but they have not returned to Him. God laid His hand of discipline on them, but they have not returned to Him. So they must be warned: prepare to meet your Maker, your God, your Lord of hosts, your Judge.

By repenting alone, we would not be prepared to meet God with cheerfulness and confidence. Judas Iscariot sorrowed over his sin, but his sorrow was unto death driving him to despair, and it did not prepare him to meet his God.

How did the people meet their God, as they watched Him on the cross? "*He trusts in the Lord, let the Lord deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, if He is so pleased with Him*" (Psalm 22:8). Sure enough, the rulers fulfilled those words, "*He saved others. Let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, the Chosen One*" (Luke 23:35). Sure enough, the thief beside Him said it, too, "*Aren't you the*

Christ? Save yourself and us" (Luke 23:39). This is no way to meet God, with sins and doubts and insults. Meeting God this way does nothing but prove the Son had a purpose to die—for our sins.

To be prepared to meet God, we must have the assurance, the certainty that our transgressions are forgiven, that our sins are put away, and that these same sins will never be counted toward us for all eternity. This assurance we can have alone through faith in Jesus Christ, who alone atones for sins, "*and not only for ours, but for the sins of the whole world.*" This faith must be in us, that Jesus Christ carried our sins and has carried them away that no one can find them. This must be our faith, our hope, our trust, our confidence, our unwavering persuasion and our one and only plea before God and the Father, that in Jesus Christ, the Father made a promise, "*I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins no more*" (Jer. 31:34). The persuading grace of God is the forgiveness of sins. Only that can prepare us to meet our God. This persuading grace alone can give us the assurance to approach Him, because this cross of His works in us a good conscience towards God.

How persuasive is this forgiveness? Behold the cross. That God who formed the mountains, who framed the heavens, who creates the wind, who reads the hearts of men, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who leads the angels, that God is surely able to save the soul from sin and destruction. It is His cross that is so persuasive.

Amos delivers it as the theme of his book, **The Lord Roars**. Meet the Lord who roars. No more clearly does the Lord roar than when you meet Him on Calvary, as He roars for His people, Zion.

- The Lord roars from Zion, "*Father, forgive them.*"
- The Lord roars from Zion, "*Today you will be with me in paradise.*"
- The Lord roars from Zion, "*It is finished.*"
- The Father roars redemption for us as He views His own beloved Son.
- The Lord roars, justifying us from sin.
- The Lord roars the gift of the Holy Spirit, that He has washed us in new life.
- The Lord roars from Zion with promises to preserve us and finally deliver us from all evil.
- With our repentance, heaven roars with the angel's rejoicing.
- Then heaven will roar when God receives us to Himself.

With a shout of triumph, we will meet our God, for He has met our sins on the cross, and so He has met us with roars of love.

Everyone who has this mix of emotions on Good Friday, sorrow over sin and trust in His forgiveness, is prepared to meet God. Death may come to you today or tomorrow, suddenly or slowly, but it cannot harm you. *For whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life;* in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.