

Amos 6:1-7 Sermon Outline

Theme: Israel was complacent because of their strong position in their immediate area and would face the consequences.

Intro: Rapport/Application

Point 1: Complacency

From experience/image: you know how this looks/feels

complacency = a false sense of security ie think things are going from good to better, when in fact they're going from bad to worse

The leaders of Israel & Judah had a false sense of security because of their material position / luxury

ie notable men, of the foremost nation

the other great cities in the area couldn't compete, even Assyria busy elsewhere, and they thought God's next move was vindication and blessing in the Great Day of the Lord, not a day of judgement to whom people come

Illustrate/apply from society eg stars/celebrities

country: economy doing well, island continent

then bring to bear on ourselves; church, busy, prosperous, new faces

where can we find a misguided sense of security:

individuals; making big money, owning things/toys, capable, successful

Do you feel secure? Why? People, armies, finance? Is it wise to trust these?

mistakes: to compare ourselves with those lesser, money, things, military

Ill: 9/11, Iraq, Tsunami

Point 2: What does complacency look like?

From experience/image: you know how this looks/feels

lifestyle cf vv 4-6

luxury,

gluttony: eating meat with any regularity was the privilege of the wealthy alone

drunkenness, not goblets, but bowls

the result of violence and exploitation of the ordinary citizens looted of their good through bribes and taxes (2:6-8; 3:11; etc

Illustrate/apply from society eg stars/celebrities

then bring to bear on ourselves; church,

individuals

What are you going to do about it?

attitude: injustice, unrighteousness, violence ie abuse of their social and financial position cf v3 ignoring God's coming judgement and accepting a reign of terror

Illustrate/apply from society eg stars/celebrities

then bring to bear on ourselves; church,

individuals

What are you going to do about it?

What did God want Israel to do? humility not pride (6:8), justice for the poor, fatherless, widow (6:12; 5:24); righteousness (6:12; 5:24) cf parable of the sheep & goats

Be an example to the nations / lead the nations to him, rather than be comfortable, complacent, self-centred in God's blessing

Apply to Western society in relation to the world eg international debt, Ill: Bono, Chuck Colson

Church

Individuals

no concern for the cracks beginning to appear ie ruin of Joseph; people oppressed, immorality, economy of the nation crumbling, military power about to be decimated

Illustrate/apply from society eg stars/celebrities

then bring to bear on ourselves; church,

individuals

What are you going to do about it?

this is actually a funeral 'wake', only, not much mourning and grieving here.

Set kingdom vision

Point 3: Consequences

From experience/image: you know how this looks/feels

And so they would be the first to go into exile, their feasting and lounging would end

Those considering themselves number one in the nation would be number one into exile

their funeral feasting/lounging would become their own funeral (Woe v1)

Do we grieve over the ruin of Joseph/ the state of Christianity in Australia?

Apply: what's going to happen to us if we become increasingly complacent Are we facing very difficult times ahead if things don't change?

society, church, individuals

Where is our only hope: cf ch 5:14,15 Seek me and live. Seek God through Jesus and live

Commit yourself to him; to justice, righteousness, humility, helping the poor and downtrodden, cf vv7-13

Kingdom vision/Be inspired

Aim: Seek God and live

Alas to you complacent/feeling secure in Zion/Samaria; you No 1 men of the No 1 nation

You put off the evil day and bring near a reign of terror

Woe [Alas] to you who are complacent in Zion,
and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria,
you notable men of the foremost nation,
to whom the people of Israel come!

² Go to Calneh and look at it;

go from there to great Hamath,
and then go down to Gath in Philistia.

Are they better off than your two kingdoms?

Is their land larger than yours?

³ You put off the evil day

and bring near a reign of terror.

lounge on beds of ivory, eat choice food, improvise music, drink to excess, use the best lotions/cosmetics

but you don't grieve over the ruin of Joseph

Therefore you will be the first to go into exile, your feasting and lounging will end.

⁴ You lie on beds inlaid with ivory

and lounge on your couches.

You dine on choice lambs

and fattened calves.

⁵ You strum away on your harps like David

and improvise on musical instruments.

⁶ You drink wine by the bowlful

and use the finest lotions,

but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.

⁷ Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile;

your feasting and lounging will end.

Amos 6:1-7

Dear congregation, the young and not so young

I was asked tonight to preach on complacency. But what even is that? And my dictionary tells me that complacency is being satisfied with yourself or what you've achieved. Complacency is feeling like you've made it, you can settle back, get comfortable – the hard work's done and you can just settle back now and enjoy yourself.

And we can all relate to that, can't we. We get to the end of a hard week. We've worked hard. We've earned our keep. We've got our pay in our hand. And now we're just going to settle back with some friends in the backyard, around the BBQ, beers and wine all 'round, and just enjoy each other's company for a couple of hours.

Surely there's nothing wrong with that?

And there isn't.

But what about if you're standing on the beach on Boxing Day 2004 in Sumatra, watching the water being sucked out into the Indian Ocean in a way you've never seen before, leaving boats stranded on the beach high and dry. The signs are there, if you can read them, that millions of tonnes of water are about to come surging up the beach in a minute destroying everything in their path – trees, buildings, people.

If you knew how to read those signs, but were so busy enjoying yourself on the beach that you took no notice, then there would be something wrong with that, wouldn't there? That's complacency.

Point 1

Complacency isn't just a sense of a job well done at the end of the week. *Complacency is a false sense of security.* A sense that things are going great, when the signs are telling you – if only you would read them - that they're actually going from bad to worse.

It comes down a lot to how you measure things. After all, WA is booming. The economy is moving ahead.

There's more work than people to do it. And so if that's your measure of success, WA is doing great. On the other hand, that leads to inflated property prices, inefficiency in industry. And so if stability and efficiency are your measure of success, then we're not doing so well.

And you see from the book of Amos that *the leaders of Israel had been lulled into a false sense of security* – they'd become complacent.

After all, they were on top of the pile. As Amos says here, they saw themselves as the notable men, the people everyone else noticed. They were the celebrities of Israel – the actors, the rock stars, the faces on Australian Idol. Everyone seemed to look up to them.

And for that matter, *Israel was the foremost nation* in the area. You could go and look at the other major city states in their part of the world mentioned here, but they were nothing in comparison. Israel called the shots in their part of the world. They were the superpower in their little pond.

They'd been lulled into a false sense of security.

But are we in the same situation?

Maybe WA is doing well economically. Maybe *Australia* is. But if China is the economic superpower of the future as the business world seems to think, where will we find ourselves in a generation if we just enjoy the high life now? Are we reading the right signs?

And how about in your *local church*? Maybe things are looking good. There's more money coming in than you need. Everyone's busy doing something. There's new faces most Sunday. And some of the latest changes have been really exciting. We're feeling good about ourselves. But are they the right signs to be watching?

And what about when it comes to *yourself*? Maybe you're making big money. You've just paid your deposit on the latest commodore. Or you've just been promoted from secretary to personal assistant to the manager. Everything seems to be going great. But are you reading the right signs?

Are we really doing well in the big scheme of things, or are we just getting a false sense of security from the lesser things - becoming complacent in the things that really matter. Are we enjoying ourselves on the beach

while the water is being sucked out into the Indian Ocean?

Point 2

And so a good question to ask is *'what does complacency look like?'* If we know what to look for, that will help us gauge where we're really at, as a country, as a church, in our own life.

And you see what *complacency looked like in the lives of the leaders of Israel* in Amos' day there in verses 4-6.

They *lay around on beds of inlaid ivory*. You might have some idea of how expensive ivory is. Welcome to the houses of the rich and famous.

And *they dine on choice lambs and fattened calves*. And you've got to remember that in their day, most people could hardly afford to eat meat. But these leaders of Israel gorge themselves on it every day.

And *they're getting drunk to the point of unconsciousness*. They didn't drink wine by the glassful but the bowlful. Why just have a glass when you can enjoy the whole cask?

And to make it even worse, they can only afford this lifestyle by *exploiting the average citizens*, through bribes and taxes, using whatever violence it took to get what they wanted. Chapter 2 says that 'they sell the righteous for silver, the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.' To them, people are just a means to an end.

And you can probably think of *people in our society who are the same*. I think it's Bono, from the band U2, who talks about how ridiculous it is that we pay entertainers and the entertainment industry the obscene amounts of money we do. As a general rule, how do they benefit society really? And yet we pay them ridiculous amounts of money as a society so they can live their lives of luxury, gluttony, drunkenness, and excess.

But bringing it a bit closer to home, *what about you?* Is your life something like that? Are you so busy enjoying yourself, eating, drinking, partying, living in the bars and on the beaches, that you've lost all sense

of the more important things. Life is fun, and that's all that matters. Have you settled for complacency?

As well as that, complacency doesn't only shape our lifestyle, but *our attitudes*. The rest of the book of Amos gives us the details when it talks about a society governed by injustice, unrighteousness, immorality, violence, and abuse. They couldn't care less about these more important things, but only their own standard of living.

Thinking a little closer to home again though, did you know that in the 1970's there was so much money around in countries like the United States and Australia, that we gave cheap loans to many of the poorest countries in the world. Then over the next 10 years or so, the world market changed, interest rates shot through the roof. And these countries were left with debts that they can't even pay the interest on any more. And part of the responsibility for that is theirs, but part of it is ours. And when they pay us money that they owe, at the expense of meeting their own desperate needs for food, clean water, education and health, so that we can live our lives of luxury, then we've got to admit that there's a problem that we need to help fix. People are dying of starvation every day in those countries, so that we can buy our burgers, fries, and coke. Are you complacently enjoying being one of the richest 10% of the world's population without a care for the other 90%.

And maybe you wonder *what we can possibly do about it?* What could Israel in Amos' day have done about it?

And verse 8 after this passage implies that *trading in pride for humility* is a good place to start. Not being happy to just enjoy our lifestyle without question as if they simply deserve whatever they get for whatever reason.

And verse 12 implies that bringing *justice and righteousness* to bear on the situation is another good place to start. Playing our small part. We can support an organisation like Jubilee that is already working for a just and compassionate solution?

And if you think back to the parable of the sheep and goats for a minute, you'll remember that Jesus judges

by the same principles. How are you doing when it comes to humility, justice, and righteousness?

And even more importantly, instead of just meandering through life complacently enjoying our affluent lifestyle, *God wants us to be involved in leading the nations to him*. As we tell people why we live the way we live, why we help the way we help. As we share the gospel with them. As we sacrifice so that we can support missionaries overseas. As we consider whether God is calling us to be a missionary, or an evangelist here in Perth.

As well as that *God wants us to be involved in growing each other to greater maturity in him*, encouraging each other in our spiritual walk, maybe leading a bible study group, maybe helping in Sunday School, care group, taking up a position of leadership in the church when we're called to do that.

And so you notice from verse 6 here in Amos that *God gets really angry* at people who enjoy the luxury of their own lifestyle at the ruin of their people. The cracks were appearing in the Israel of Amos' day – exploitation, immorality, shaky economy. But as the foundations were crumbling under them, the leaders were partying.

Point 3

And *if God gets angry, that means consequences*. Hit your thumb with a hammer and you lose your nail.

Crash your car, and it costs to get it fixed. Get God angry and you pay the consequences.

So what are the consequences of complacency?

Well, believe it or not, *these verses tonight actually describe a funeral wake*. Someone has died. The family and friends have gathered to pay their last respects. And it was normal to spend some time mourning and some time enjoying each other's company over a meal. But as you can see, there's not much mourning going on here, but plenty of excessive eating and drinking. These leaders who see themselves as the number 1 citizens of the number 1 country spend their time getting fat and drunk at funeral feasts.

And the consequence God has in store for them is there in verse 7. These first citizens of the first country will be *the first ones to go into exile*. Their funeral feasting and lounging would become their own funeral. Which is why verse 1 starts with the word ‘woe’. These verses are a funeral lament by Amos for the leaders of Israel.

Maybe the Assyrian army wasn’t knocking down their door at the moment. But it was only a matter of time. 30 years later they came and smashed Israel to pieces. What could be knocked down was. What could be burnt was burnt. Anyone who resisted them died. And after it was all over, the royalty and leaders that were left were the first people dragged away to Assyria by hooks pierced through their nostrils or lips.

And *we face a similar kind of result* if we grow more and more complacent.

You only have to look at Zimbabwe to see how quickly a *country* can turn around, and go from a nation providing for others to a nation that can’t provide for itself. You only have to look to Holland to see how quickly a nation can turn around spiritually – from what everyone considered a Christian nation 50 years ago to a nation that many people believe will be Muslim in the next 10 years or so.

And Australia will go the same kind of way if Christians in Australia become increasingly complacent. If we become increasingly complacent.

And *churches* can go through exactly the same kind of cycle. Churches can come and go in 50 years if they settle for comfort and complacency. Many people believe that when churches begin to make decisions for their own comfort rather than God’s kingdom, they’ve signed their death warrant for 50 years later unless God in his grace puts them back on track for faithful, committed hard work for him. We are facing hard times ahead, in Australia, and in our churches, if we settle for our own comfort and complacency.

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So, do you grieve for the state of your country, your church? Do you grieve for the state of Christianity in Australia, in your church? We’re already on the down escalator that will lead us to ruin, unless we fight our own complacency, commit ourselves to faithful service to God in whatever way he chooses, and run against the direction.

His answer to the ruin of our country, our church, is there in chapter 5, “Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire. ... Seek good, not evil, that you may live. ... Hate evil, love good; maintain justice Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy”

Have you moved from complacency to commitment? Or are you facing your ruin?

Maybe you think all of this sounds a bit far fetched. But it isn't really. Not so long ago there was a Canadian evangelist called Charles Templeton. In his prime up to 30 000 people a night would flock to hear him preach. For a while he was more famous than his team-mate Billy Graham. Thousands have said they found salvation through his preaching. But things changed. He began to question the Bible. He became complacent. He ended up falling into complete unbelief and eventually wrote a book called, 'Farewell to God: My reasons for rejecting the Christian faith.' A couple of years ago he died, as far as anyone knows without coming back to the gospel.

Don't settle for complacency! Turn from complacency to commitment.