

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. So we have some interesting readings here today. A lot of judgment, quite frankly. Amos is speaking and Amos is one of the prophets that is speaking right before the Babylonian exile. And he is basically saying that justice has been turned to wormwood. In other words, there is nothing good that mankind has done and especially in the nation of Israel, they have rebelled against God and they have chased after false gods. And as a result they're going to be taken into captivity in Babylon. And we are told then to hate evil and to love good. And we are told to establish justice in the gate. And also we're told to be prudent and be silent. Don't open your mouth and be thought a fool, just keep your mouth shut when you're going to be misinterpreted and misunderstood.

But God is saying, "Look, I've given you all of these blessings." He planted them in this wonderful place, this promised land. He gave them all that they needed. And what did they do? They were unfaithful and they followed it after false gods. Now quite frankly, this should not come as a big surprise because this is kind of the history of the nation of Israel. Even when they were in Egypt and even through the Exodus, their main job was to grumble and complain against God. At least that's what they like to do the most. See, when God came to save the Israelites out of Egypt, it was not because the Israelites were being faithful. In Egypt, the Israelites had started to follow the gods of Egypt. They were not being faithful people of the one true God. They were falling away and they were worshiping the gods of the culture that they were in.

So why in the world did God save them in the first place? Because God is faithful, because God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to Joseph that he would save them, that he would bring them out of captivity and he would bring them into the promised land. And that's exactly what he did. And when they got in the wilderness and they were saved from the slavery in Egypt, what did they do? They grumbled and complained. But more importantly, and most importantly, they followed after false gods. They did not trust in the Lord their God and they did not trust his word. And so they were destroyed. There's not a single adult that made it into the promised land. It was only their children. The next generation. Well, okay, sorry, Caleb and Joshua made it in, but those were the only two people in the entire generation that made it into the promised land because of their unbelief. In essence, there is only one sin. There is only one problem.

That is lack of faith, unbelief. Everything else is just commentary on that one thing. Everything else that we do is rebellion against the true God who has given us all good things. And so God is constantly bringing about trials and tribulations to try and help us to remember that our security is found in nothing but his word. And we've gone through quite a big trial in the last week or so, and some of us

thought we might lose everything and some of us did lose quite a bit. And yet why are we here today? We're here today because we value the word of God more than we value our stuff. We're here because we put our security in God's word, not in the size of our bank account or the niceness of our house or our health or our well-being or anything else. You see, there is only one thing that saves... There is only one thing that is permanent that will last through the hurricanes and through the disasters and through the diagnoses and through the recessions and depressions and the loss of income and the loss of jobs.

There's only one thing that is secure in our lives in all circumstances, and that is the word of God and his promises given to us. And that is what we are called to hold onto today. That is what this is all about. Jesus was talking, going on his way, and a man comes to him and says, teacher, good teacher, what must I do? Now there's a problem right there. What must I do, as if it's up to us to earn our salvation before God? Well, the one thing that we've learned from the Old Testament and kind of the reason for the Old Testament is even though they were given the laws directly from God, literally on stone tablets, there was no ambiguity in what God wanted for the people to do.

And they knew it came from God because they heard it and they saw it. They literally saw a cloud of fire and a cloud of smoke. There was no doubt that this was God and this is what God wanted them to do. And what did they do with that information? They rebelled. They complained. They chased after other gods. They did not believe his word and they did not follow him. Of course, as much as I would love to say that I'm different than them, I'm not. We also find our security and find our hope very often in other places. We often think that we are good, like this young man said, good teacher. We often think that we deserve. Or if we do enough good that God will reward us.

But the fact of the matter is we know for a fact that just because we're Christians doesn't mean life is going to be easy. That's not the promise that God gives to us. Believe in me and I'll make your life smooth sailing. No, that's not what he says. Believe in me and you will have tribulation. Take up your cross and follow me. If you believe in me, people will hate you for the message you give. I mean, this is what God says. We don't follow after God because it's easy or convenient.

We follow after God because we believe that he is our only hope. We follow after God because he has promised us that he is with us to the very end of the age, and then he will always give us what we need to support this body in life, even in the midst of a hurricane, even in the midst of trials and tribulations, even in the midst of the last breath that we draw, he will be with us and he will provide us what we need. And that is the promise and the surety and the certainty of everlasting life and the forgiveness of sins. Everything else is transitory. Your bank account is

transitory. It's not going to save you. Our government is not going to save us. One political party or the other or any other party out there is not going to save us. There is only one thing and one thing alone that we should put our hope in. And that is Christ. Everything else will fall away.

And whatever trials we face, we know God is with us. I saw a little comedy act recently and it described Florida in essence, Monday volcano, 350 degrees. Tuesday, hurricane with a thousand-mile winds, one to 200 inches of rain. Wednesday Godzilla, we don't really know what's going to happen with Godzilla, but the Godzilla is coming. But if you look at Thursday through Sunday, it's beautiful and sunny. Don't you want to live in Florida? The idea is everything is transitory. There is good and there is bad, and we don't know which one we're going to get. But what we do know is that God is with us in it all.

Now, when he's talking to this young man, first off he says, I find it interesting. He says, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good." Now, if somebody comes up to me saying, pastor, you're a really good man, I tend to take that as a compliment and I like to hear it, but Jesus is getting at something deeper. No one is good except God alone. See, already by the question, Jesus's response, he's making it very clear. All have sinned, including you young man, all have sinned and falls short of the glory of God. He wants the young man to recognize where his hope resides. This young man is still thinking that if he's good enough, if he follows God's word well enough, he might be able to earn and do enough good. And so Jesus says, first off, one, you call me good, but only God is good. You don't understand good yet, because God is right here. You're talking to God.

And then second he says, "You know the commandments." And then he lists them, don't murder. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't bear false witness. Don't defraud and honor your father and mother. And what does this young man say? "Well, I've done all of that consistently from my youth." And we're looking at him going, yeah, you're a little bit foolish there, young man. But the reality is if we just look at the law from a surface level, a lot of us could probably say, yeah, I'm a good person. I've honored my father and mother. I haven't committed murder. I haven't stabbed anybody in the back that I know of. I mean, I'm a good person. He was looking at only the surface level. And if we squint hard enough and in the right light, when we look at God's demands of the law, we can maybe think we're doing a good job.

But the reality of the matter is we have all sinned and fall short. And I find it interesting that when Jesus lists these commandments, he doesn't list the key ones. No other gods but me, don't misuse my name, and honor the Sabbath day. He only lists the ones that are dealing with our relationship with each other. Because he knows very clearly, there's no way anybody's going to think that they can follow

those first three or at least they ought not to. But there's a lot of people in this world that think I'm a pretty good person. I live up to 10 Commandments. As long as I don't mention the first three, I'm good.

But the first three are the most important. You should have no other gods but me. That means if you lose your job, if you lose your livelihood, if you lose your retirement account, if you lose your home, if you lose your health, God is still God and he is still good and he is still giving you what you need. And that is faith in him because we recognize everything in this world is transitory. It's not going to last. And so why hold onto it? We're to be generous. We're not to be worried about our money or our finances or anything else. We're to give without thought of return.

We're to be willing, as Jesus tells this young man, okay, you know what? He's just going to gloss over the fact that he doesn't know what he's talking about. He says, okay, you lack one thing. Go and sell everything that you have. Give it to the poor and come follow me. And what will you have? You'll have treasure in heaven. Eternal life. Young man walks away dejected because he had great wealth, because his wealth was his God. That was what gave him security. That is what helped him to feel like he was secure in this world was how much money he had.

He failed to recognize that it's only God. Now you and I need to have the same understanding. Not that you have to absolutely sell everything you have and give to the poor. That's not what this is saying. Oh, this is what everybody has to do. No, but if God calls you to it, you ought to be willing to give up everything. Can you imagine that in your own life? Are you able in your heart to give up everything that you own and have, to keep and hold on to Christ? That's what he tells us we are called to do.

And in order to enable us to do that, he gives us the gifts that we might have and be secure in that. Every day when you walk into this church, you are confronted with a baptismal font. If you're not paying attention, you might run into it. It's there at the center. Because why do we find hope in this world? Because of what happened in the baptismal font. We've been brought into the kingdom of God by the water and the word, and we are his children, and that means something. And we believe it to be secure because he said it. And then we come before him and we confess our sins. We lay it out before him. I'm just like the Israelites. I've rebelled and I've complained, but I put my hope and my faith in you because you have forgiven me. And that is a gift.

And then he gives us this gift. I love to hear these words. In his stead and by his command, I forgive you all of your sins. I know I'm the one that's saying them, but I'm still hearing them at the same time. But because they're for me as much as they are for you. And those are beautiful words to hear and to know, that God has

OCTOBER 13, 2024 SERMON

forgiven us. And then just to make sure we hear a wonderful message, we read his word where he lays it out for us, and then hopefully I explain it well that you can understand and make connections.

And then just to make sure we're still getting it and we're still reassured and we're still held firm in his promises, we receive his real body and his real blood for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. God never wants us to doubt his love for us. He loves us and he gives us his gifts in so many different ways. Baptism, confession, the word being proclaimed the body and blood, all of that so that we might be secure. So that we might be confident that in spite of the fact that we have rebelled like the Israelites did, we still can trust his promise that he gave to us through son Jesus Christ on the cross. We can hold fast to Christ's death and resurrection and be confident that he will bring us home.

And that is what we are called to remember this day. As we go out into the world, as we see the chaos that is a result of this hurricane or the international chaos that is a result of wars and rumors of wars or famine and pestilence or whatever else it might be out there, we know this. God is faithful, his words are true, and he will save us, not because we deserve it, but because he promised he would. And those words are true because you are his child and he knows you by name. May his grace and his mercy and his peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.