

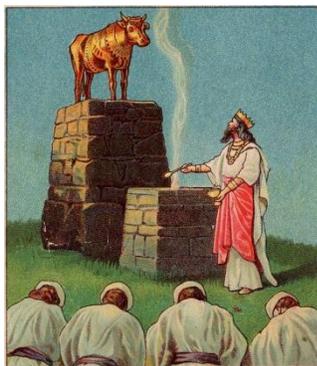
TEXT: Amos 7:10-17

THEME: ONE THING NEEDFUL

1. The Word of God Is What We Need
2. Even If We Don't Want to Hear It

Dear Christian Friends:

A little Bible history lesson is probably in order to help us better understand our text. After Solomon's reign, after Solomon had died, his son, Rehoboam became king, but Rehoboam was harsh and cruel. So, one of Solomon's former commanders, a man by the name of Jeroboam, led a rebellion against Rehoboam and took control of the northern tribes of Israel. Israel, that had been united under Saul, David, and Solomon, was now split between Judah in the south and Israel in the north. Jeroboam I shunned the temple in Jerusalem, where God told his people to worship him, and set up alternate worship sites, including one in Bethel. He snubbed the priesthood of Judah and formed his own. He patterned the worship after heathen, pagan Canaanite worship by setting up false idols. Jeroboam I even made two golden calves and proclaimed, **"Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt"** (1 Kings 12:28). Israel had slipped into pagan worship despite God's repeated commands to worship him and him alone. Years later, Jeroboam II came to power and continued these sins.



"Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28).

This is when God dispatched the prophet Amos from Judah to confront Israel.

But, a priest in Bethel named Amaziah demanded that Amos return to Judah: **"You must never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the sanctuary of the king and the national temple."** Amaziah and Jeroboam were threatened by this so-called conspiracy. The last thing the king needed was a dissident in his kingdom. Jeroboam wanted nothing to do with God's Word; he wanted to keep his power

intact.

We too brush aside God's Word when it seems to get in our way. All too often I have heard Christians say, "We don't have to go to church to worship God. We can read our Bibles and worship him at home." To such people I always say, "Good! Read your Bible, and you will quickly discover how much God wants his believers to gather together to hear his Word and receive his sacrament." Too often I hear Christians state, "We aren't getting married. We're just going to live together and if it works out maybe we'll get married down the road. After all, you wouldn't buy a car without taking it for a test drive." How romantic to compare your significant other to buying a car! Too often I hear from Christians, "Our marriage has just gotten to hard and tough and miserable. We're splitting up. Hopefully we can each find someone who makes us happy." And I hear more and more Christians these days saying, "Oh, lighten up,

Pastor! We can do anything we want because God forgives all sins anyway. Besides, God wants us to be happy.” We get so engulfed in our own desires and cravings that we ignore God’s call to repentance. God’s Word can seem like an annoyance or even an obstacle to our success, happiness, and pleasure. It is so easy to disregard God’s Word as Jereboam did.

However, Jereboam’s real problem was not losing political power. It was his nation’s sin. The solution was to heed God’s Word—not to brush it aside like a threat. The real problem for us also is sin and the death it brings. The real solution is Christ who forgives our sin and gives us eternal life. The message of repentance and grace is preached to us as it was in Israel by Amos. It is the ONE THING NEEDFUL.

But how do we perceive that ONE THING NEEDFUL? Certainly we think of the gospel as good news; after all, that’s what gospel means: good news. But what about the law of God? Do we consider God’s will to be a tether on us, something that restricts us, something that is bad news? There is nothing quite like that feeling the moment someone says, “I have some bad news.” The heart sinks and so does the face. Too stunned to panic, we wait in a frozen moment until the bombshell hits. Nobody likes to get bad news, but we need to hear it. Amos certainly spoke bad news to the Israelites. Their sins were too great for God to ignore. The words Amos spoke in our text display a wrath of God nobody wants to hear about.

What happens if we do not hear bad news? Nobody wants to hear a bad medical diagnosis, but without it, there is no desire to embrace a cure. The Israelites needed to hear the bad news about their idol worship so that they could turn from their sin and be forgiven.

We are sick, and we need to hear the diagnosis. We are, in fact, so sick that we by nature refuse to hear the diagnosis. We need to be forced into repentance because we cannot do it ourselves. In chapter four of his prophecy, Amos quotes the Lord, listing some horrific events God allowed to plague Israel. After each one the Lord laments, **“Yet you have not returned to me.”** God used awful things to try to bring Israel back to trust in him.

Like a surgeon wielding a scalpel, God cuts to heal. He allows bad things to happen to us so that we might repent and turn to him for forgiveness and salvation. He understands that we by nature abhor bad news and choose to ignore it rather than face the reality of our deathly condition. He sends us bad things, not because he delights in our suffering but because he wants us to trust in him. It is truly an amazing mercy that God even uses horrific things and his harsh law for our eternal good. The Word of God lays out the devastating diagnosis so that we might be healed with the gospel. IT IS WHAT WE NEED, EVEN IF WE DON’T WANT TO HEAR IT. Amen.

prayer of the church

O Lord, light of the world and saving strength of your people, we thank you for the gift of your Word. Implant it in the hearts of your people, so that, set free from the power of Satan and the fear of death, we may live to serve and honor you.

Pour out your Spirit on us, that we may hear, listen, and obey your Word, even when we don't want to hear it. Cause us to grow in divine knowledge and spiritual understanding. Bless the proclamation of your Word everywhere, so that hearts may be turned from the darkness of spiritual ignorance, falsehood, and despair to the light of knowledge, truth, and life.

Let your Word shine in our homes, that parents and children may dwell together in love and serve one another in kindness and humility. Bless the proclamation of your Word at our Vacation Bible School last week. Keep the children who sang your praises strong in their faith all the days of their lives. Give encouragement and satisfaction to all the teachers, helpers, and volunteers that helped to make our VBS worthwhile.

We ask you to watch over the sick, the sorrowing, the anxious, and the weary. Preserve those who are in any danger of body or soul. We pray especially for Ken Reisig, who will have knee replacement surgery this coming week, and for Brian Abraham, who is struggling to survive a heart attack. Watch over them and give guidance and wisdom to their doctors. Keep their faith strong, and if it is your will, heal them and let them return quickly to their homes and the work you have for them to do. Supply us by the grace of Jesus with the Spirit's power, that we may ever be comforted by your truth and sustained by your love.

We join with Lloyd and Loretta Kramer in thanking you for 63 years of blessings on their marriage. Be with them in the future as you have been in the past, and continue to fill their hearts and their home with your love.

For these and all the other things you know we need, we confidently ask in the name of him who gave himself for us that we might live through him, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER in today's language