

“The Servant and God”
Pastor John Bronson

Amos 7:1-9

November 24, 2013

Order of worship for 11/24/13, title, “The Servant and God”, text, Amos 7:1-9

Opening Song:

Welcome

Invocation: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Message Theme: Those who speak for God must speak from a heart of love for the Lord and for those they serve with God’s word.

Worship Theme: Praising God for His perfect faithfulness in the face of our sinful waywardness.

Sunday Evening in the Word

2 Peter 2:4-10

5:30 pm to 7:00 pm, Church Library

Opening Song:

“Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” Song # 797

Welcome

Invocation: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Special Music: “When I Cry” by Larry Hammonds

Preparing the Heart in Song:

“Count Your Blessings” Song # 786

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” Song # 139

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Offering & Offertory

Message: “The Servant and God” Amos 7:1-9

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Response to the Word:

“The Bond of Love”

Song # 423

Parting Word of Grace and Invitation to Prayer

**Please Join Us At 4 pm in the Sanctuary
for the Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner!**

No Sunday Evening Service Tonight

“The Prayer Closet”

November 18, 2013

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

National and District Evangelical Free Church Offices: the Lord will give them wisdom as they provide services and counsel to local churches during these days of financial leanness and governmental and social hostility; the Lord will give wisdom and strength to the new District Superintendent, Neal Brower, as he makes contact with Pastors and churches; the Lord will be pleased to use EFCA ReachGlobal to bless many in the Philippines

President Obama: the Spirit will open his mind to the truth and protect him from falsehood and deceit; the Lord will humble him before His majesty and goodness; the Father will draw him and his family to faith in Jesus

Angel Tree and AWANA: the Lord will raise up all the needed volunteers for both of these ministries to effectively bring God’s love and truth into the lives of many children

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: SPC Tim Hammonds, Air Force (son of Tom and Cindy): God's grace through the divorce process and that He draw Tim back into a deeper relationship

Young Adult of the Week: Emily Lundberg, UCLA (daughter of Mark and Susan): Praise for a good roommate situation, ministry is going well; please pray for the ministry (Greek Crossing) to continue to go well, for direction after graduation

Please pray for our homebound family members: Fred & Jean Pauly, Gary & Ruth Lentz, Hilda Chapman

(please call the office to request updates)

The title is “The Servant of God” and the text is Amos 7:1-9. When you read virtually any of the authors that are given to us, and perhaps especially in some ways the prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah who are so long, it is good for us to remember that we don’t – there is no supposition that we have written down everything they said. What we have in the book of Amos as in all the rest of the prophets is a compilation, a pulling together under the prompting of the Spirit what were the best portions, the ones most relevant, the ones to be written down as the Word of God and kept forever, is what we are told. If you think about Amos, Amos began with four chapters of remarkable judgment, just hammering. First he hammers all of the surrounding nations, and then he hits Judah and then his concentration is on Israel, wanting to bring clearly to mind in these people where they had departed from the faith, had ceased to follow after God, had abandoned His Word and in fact worse than that, had taken His Word and twisted it so that it became the expression of their desires instead of the will of God, a profound error. When you look at chapters five and six, there is actually a significant change in the tone. You might recall that he calls it a lamentation, a song of great sorrow. The necessary thing to keep in mind – and I appreciated the special music today – is that God responds to human sin not just in judgment, but also in sorrow. In those two chapters what we understood is that the lamentation when Amos calls Israel a virgin – and she was anything but a virgin, had never been, had constantly dabbled in idolatry and immorality, she was as rotten as anybody you could ever want [to know]. In fact, as I just got through reading the [two Books of the] Kings, they did sins greater than the peoples whom God had condemned before they came into the land. So how could He possibly call Israel a virgin? So you have to understand that God was saying, “I have treated you as if you were one; I have held out to you hope.” The lament, the sorrow on the part of God is that this was an opportunity for cleansing and purification which you refused. So He weeps that His own people have said to Him, “No thanks, it is not for me.” So God weeps.

Now we come to the seventh chapter. In the seventh chapter what we actually have is Amos taking us into his prayer closet and he shares with us a conversation between himself and God. I want to stop at that point and I want you just to reflect for a moment on your prayer life, the prayer life that you have personally with God and the prayer life that you have in the context of your family. As I myself thought about this, I realized that in all of the years that I grew up in a fine Presbyterian home – my parents were true believers – not once, ever, did I see my father and mother pray together, not once. Father would pray at the meals. Mom and I prayed together at different times, often times. But I never I saw my mom and my Dad pray together. There are many things that we have to overcome as we seek to follow in closer obedience to what the Word tells us. As we wrestle with those issues it is good for us to recognize that there are two things which profoundly shape and direct our actions. One are the models that have been lived out before us. Those are our memories. When those memories begin early, they are printed deeply on the soul. Not wishing to be critical of my parents, but they did not print deeply on my soul the model of a man and wife in prayer together. That is a great loss. The other are dreams. It is the memories that pull us back and it is the dreams that call us forward. What are the dreams that activate your heart? What are the dreams that call forth your love, the passion of your soul? When we look now at what Amos has to say I think we will necessarily understand that in Amos’ heart there is a profound love for God’s people. I think that that love that he has is an expression, a manifestation, an outward flow of the dreams that he had, the dreams of the people of God being the people of God. Join me now in reading 7:1-9.

(7:1) *“This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king’s mowings. (7:2) When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, ‘O Lord God, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!’ (7:3) The Lord relented concerning this; ‘It shall not be,’ said the Lord. (7:4) This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, the Lord God was calling for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. (7:5) Then I said, ‘O Lord God, please cease! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!’ (7:6) The Lord relented concerning this; ‘This also shall not be,’ said the Lord God.” (7:7) This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. (7:8) And the Lord said to me, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘A plumb line.’ Then the Lord said, ‘Behold I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by*

them; (7:9) the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate; and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

As I have indicated already, the shift away from what Amos has written so far is dramatic. He has turned from fiery denunciation in chapters 1-4 to lamentation in chapters 5 and 6, and now he gives as it were a report of a private conversation between himself and God. The topic is still Israel. But here God and His servant are talking things over.

This is, in some ways, this portion of this little book is in some ways the most profound section that we have an opportunity to read. It is a glimpse of and an encouragement for prayer. Just briefly in summary is that God sets in front of Amos two potential judgments of three. We are just looking at the two. We know that having catalogued the sins of Israel, when Amos hears these words of judgment, these potential judgments, he knows that Israel deserves whatever she gets. There is no question about that. So Amos' response to the judgments is not, “Oh my goodness, that is not proportionate, that is too much in terms of what they deserve.” That is not what he is saying. But twice we hear him say, “No!” Then, twice, we hear God say, “OK, I won't.” *“It shall not be...”* said the Lord in verse 4; *“This also shall not be...”* said the Lord in v. 6. So that is what is set before us. Amos prayed. God wanted those prayers. God called Amos to take a message to His people Israel. It was a message of judgment. Here we see God proposing to Amos what He might do. Amos objects. God listens.

God knew how Amos was going to respond. You can see that in Amos 4:13. You might want to look in your scriptures. This is what it says: Amos already knows this about God. *“Behold [God] who forms the mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what his thought is who makes the morning darkness and treads on the heights of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name.”* This understanding of the relationship between us as the believers and God as God is not limited to the Old Testament. If we go to the New [Testament] Jesus says exactly the same thing in the course of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:7-8. Jesus makes this comment: *“When you pray do not heap up empty phrases and the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”* He already knows! Besides that, this representation, this dynamic of prayer has already happened in the course of the Old Testament. You might recall – I am sure that Amos recalled – that in Genesis 18 God comes and deliberately allows Abraham to know that judgment is going to fall upon the two cities in which Lot, his nephew has chosen to live. Recognizing that and having a profound love for his nephew, Abraham prays, and God listens to his prayer. He listened and He made certain that Lot got out.

It happened again if we turn to Exodus 32:9-14, you have a part of the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. At one point he has to have a little conversation with God. The Israelites, not being virgins but being prostitutes, rotten, have created a golden calf the minute God's servant left town and went up on top of the mountain. In response to this God announces and says to Moses, “Let me just wipe the whole rotten bunch out and I will create a new people for myself from you.” *“I have seen this people – I am reading now from Exodus 32:9-14 – and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them in order that I may make a great nation of you.”* But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, *‘O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, “With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, “I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.”’* And the Lord relented...” He changed His mind!

Beloved I am well enough acquainted with enough of you to be able to say that this is a praying congregation. Many in this congregation have given me personal testimony how they have felt the sustaining prayers of others in the body of Christ as they have gone through various crisis, and I myself can give testimony to that fact. We pray for one another, we pray for our far flung families; we pray for those who are sick and we pray for those whom we hope will come to Christ. But let me ask you another question. In light of what has been set before us will we pray for the city that we live in? Will we pray for the county that we live in? We are God’s people. God has put us here to serve Him by bringing the light of His truth and the action of His grace into the place where we live. We are not called merely to bless one another. We are called to bless the city in which we dwell, the people of which we are a part. So will we pray for California? This is a terrible place. I read in Yahoo, the source of all knowledge and enlightenment, that of the fifty states in the Union guess which one is considered to be the most poorly run state. That statistic hides behind [it] the reality of lives impoverished, children not educated, people left uncared for, cities sunk in corruption. Will we pray? And what about our nation? Our cities and nation are adrift, falling away from the light of God’s life and truth. So the question is, will we pray?

It is a part of the mystery of God’s grace, but it is an essential part, that we recognize that the prayers of God’s faithful servants are one of the means that God uses to accomplish His will. In the last day, when I stand before the Lord, He will ask me, “Have you prayed for My people? Did you pray for the city where I put you? Did you pray for that county, that state and that nation? You were there at a time of crisis. You were there at a time when they were adrift and falling every more quickly into the shadow of unbelief. You were there when the moral fabric of your nation was being shredded. Did you pray?”

The prospect of the judgment has proposed stirs Amos to compassion. He says, “*O Lord God, please forgive.*” “*O Lord God, please cease!*” Sometimes, I have mentioned this before, I almost cannot look at some of the comments that are written by “Christians”: they will answer. There is a proverb that says if you love [cursing] [curses] will be your portion. Based on what we have heard from Amos up to this point, we don’t expect him to cry out “Have mercy, forgive this horribly rotten people.” Yet how right it is that he would respond in this way. A window is opened into Amos’ heart and soul. This why I had I Corinthians 13 read as our invocation. Amos is suddenly portrayed to us as not a self-righteous man of judgmental anger; he is a man who loves Israel, who desires her good, not her destruction. So we recognize that God wants Amos to pray these prayers of intercessory compassion, for those prayers are the articulation, they are the statement of God’s own compassion for His people. Surely we understand that those who are lost, those who are in rebellion, those who are in denial, those who are sunk in patterns of sin, what they desperately need to hear is not just, “You’re damned” but “There is a way of escape: God loves you.” That is what they need to know. Normally the heart of the sinner condemns him or herself before ever arrive on the scene.

How easy it is for us to lose sight of who God really is and how He really is. There are the attributes of God, these are His perfections. You and I are called to display those perfections. Imperfect as we are, we are called to display them. So on the one hand we know that our holy God hates sin. The fire of His holiness, His righteousness burns with a fierceness that is unquenchable; there is no question about that. Sin is a stench in God’s nostrils. Sin is an insult against His goodness and His majesty. Sin is a rebellion against His authority. True, everyone of those statements is biblically true. But God is also compassionate. We are told that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but I think sometimes we do. Let me make a little comment here. I don’t understand how dedicated Christians can sit and play computer games that are designed to give expression to delight in destruction and killing. Why do I not understand that? I do not understand that because of what I said at the very beginning of the message, that the heart is shaped by its memories and its dreams. If I take my sensibilities and devote them to fantasies of cruelty and destruction, I am shaping my heart. I don’t understand how a deepening compassion for lost people can run simultaneously, in the same stream as it were, be entertaining as a form of amusement: can you? God is a God of salvation and hope. Let me tell you: some of you know that despite my almost impeccable

character now, there were times in my raising my three [older] boys that I had issues with anger. One of the things that I recognized was that if the issues I had with anger spilled over into the relationships I would have with difficult people who were struggling with sin, and if I didn't feel that they responded quickly or appropriately to all the wise words of counsel I had given them: anger! I realized in talking to God, this won't go. This will not go. James said the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. So if I am going to deal – no offense – with you, I cannot let the judgmental heart of a Pharisee silence the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking words of peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness. Otherwise I will have negated everything I say on God's behalf from the pulpit.

Training the heart is at the core of prayer, for our prayers become the manifestation of our hearts as we talk to God.

There is more here in this little section than just the manifestation of God's attributes. If we go down to the third vision – be sure you are looking at verses 8 and following – notice what is embedded in the middle of verse eight. There God refers to Israel as “my people”. In chapter 3, you might recall, the Lord had Amos drive home to Israel the special relationship that they stood in with Him. Of that relationship He says, *“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”* He has established that relationship. It is a relationship, but in the communications through Amos up till now it is God's justifiably fierce anger which we have heard. Now there comes a shift. [God] is, of course, still fiercely angry because they are rottenly sinful, grievously sinful: that is the lamentation. But even so, He will say, you are mine, you are my people. Deeply disappointing, outrageous in your behavior, but you are mine.

Presumably in the estimation of Amos Israel could not sustain, would not survive, a locust plague. Nor would she survive a judgment by fire. We hear in this an echo of God's judgment of the surrounding nations. You might recall that each time he said, “I will light a fire on the wall.” Here He proposes a fire in the great deep. But what are we to think about his third proposal? The third proposal is given in 7:7-9:

“This what [the Lord] showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘A plumb line.’ Then the Lord said, ‘Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of y people Israel; I will never gain pass by them; he high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.’”

Amos raises no objection to this proposal, so we, rightly, we are expected to ask, why would he not objected to this when he objected to the first and the second? Why not this one? It is quite simple: the first two visions were of Israel's complete destruction, but not this one. This one is selective. Much later in time, the Apostle Paul in contemplating the standing of Israel in the sight of God even after she had turned away from the promised Messiah, would write in Romans 11:29, *“The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.”* What we are looking at is the heart of the mystery of God's grace. When was Israel chosen? When were we? Ephesians 1:3-4 says we were chosen before the foundations of the world, chosen by God to be loved. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”* This is made crystal clear, this relationship is made crystal clear by Moses relative to Israel. You will find it in Deuteronomy 7:7-8 and 9:4-6. Listen to this: God is speaking through Moses to Israel. He is saying, “Look you guys, I want you to remember something:

“It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your

fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

“Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.”

God could hardly put the matter more forcefully; we are saved because He determines to save us. But that is not the entirety of the matter as I think we know. When God determines to save us, He also and necessarily determines to make us holy. This is the rub. That is the significance of the plumb line. What is a plumb line? It is not a form fruit! A plumb line is used to ensure that a wall is vertical and that nothing is out of line. More broadly a plumb line is one of a variety of measuring tools used to ensure that what is being built meets specifications (gesture towards the Bible), Biblical specifications. That is what God is now going to do to Israel. Verse 8, *“Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never pass over—* recognize the word? No “passovering” now. This is what Amos was sent to do; he was sent to warn Israel, *“Prepare to meet your God.”* What does that mean? God is going to come into the midst of your life, your situation with a plumb line and He is going to measure you according to His specifics. That is what it means.

The covenant by which Israel became the chosen people of God was made with the people as a whole, but it was not necessarily made with every individual who might claim membership. As such the covenant provided a kind of covering for all regardless of personal faith. This is the point Paul makes in Romans 9:6-12. I suggest you turn there [and read].

“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. [He is referring to the fact that the majority of the Jews, the members of the Old Covenant, had not accepted the Messiah, so the question was “what happened to them: has the word of God failed. Paul says no.] For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, [Not all Presbyterians raised in Presbyterian homes and enjoying the covenantal relationship with God through baptism and partaking of the sacraments, not all of them are saved. That is what he is saying.] and no all are children of Abraham because they are offspring, but ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: ‘About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.’ And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’”

Who makes the decision? God makes the decision.

Now walking all the way back to Amos, Amos was sent by God to announce that the time had come. What was going to happen in this time? It was the time to sort out the difference between those who were truly the sons and daughters of Abraham through faith and those who were not. That is what is meant by saying that God would no longer pass by or pass over. In a parable Jesus told us the covenant people of God in the world, the witnessing body which carries the name of the Lord and is called by God to speak and act on His behalf in the world, always has a mixture of wheat and tares. It is always a composite body of the saved and the unsaved, the faithful and the faithless, the true citizen of heaven who is only passing through the world and the worldling who has neither hope nor interest nor faith for what lies beyond their earthly life. Remember that it was Paul who said, if we have hope only for what is in this life we are the most to be pitied. Generally, for most of the time, these two groups, tares and

wheat, exist side by side, often nearly indistinguishable, all sharing in the benefits of the covenant of God’s grace and His promised blessings. But inevitably a day of judgment comes. When the day of judgment comes, the protection of the covenant is removed from those who have rejected God in their hearts. Now they will be measured by the plumb line of faith, not only of their obedience to the letter of the law, but even more to its spirit. Let us remember what this spirit is. Amos 5:21, *“Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.”* Are we willing to pray?

Governments are established by God on the face of the earth to restrain evil and to promote good. Governments are put upon the face of the earth in order to be the instrument of God’s justice and for rightly ordering the affairs of men. When governments cease to do that, God’s people should be in prayer.

Amos is announcing that the day of judgment has come for Israel. In verse 9 we see that it is above all the judgment on the ruling elite of the nation: *“The high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against Jeroboam with a sword.”* The high place of Isaac and the sanctuaries of Israel were the worship centers and the ruling elite there displayed their extravagant religiosity in a deeply corrupted and utterly self-centered worship. The house of Jeroboam was the royal house, the ruler who encouraged and gained such great wealth and power from the practices of the elite and who along with him were crushing the poor of the land and did not honor justice and they did not honor righteousness and they did not honor mercy. It was the elite who dominated and created the cultural, the political, religious and economic institutions of the land. But as we saw last week, judgment will fall on the “little house” just as it will fall on the great house.

Amos preached. Amos went back home. Nothing seemed to happen. And then it did. The day of judgment came and Israel was simply swept away. Now it was not the end of all things, but it was the end of all things for many in Israel. It was certainly the end of the kingdom of Israel which never did recover. It was the end of the tribes, the end of the golden calves. We can be quite certain that if any survived it was because they were measured by the plumb line and they passed the test.

The question that we need to ask is not, how did it all work out in Israel? In some sense, who cares; they are all dead! Rather this is the question: do we pass the test? “Oh no, no, no: hoo ha! Big mistake by pastor. Christians don’t pass tests. We are saved by grace.” That is fine. Talk it over with the Apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 13:5 the Apostle Paul says this, *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”*

It is the controlling desire of my heart and the driving purpose of my life that no one under my ministry will fail to pass that test. If I understand the scriptures rightly, every single one who fails to pass the test will be a question that the Lord Jesus directs at me. “Pastor John, did you tell them? Could they know? Did you speak the truth? Did you love them? Did you call them? Did you want them?” Jesus will ask. So I want you to know. This is why I am committed to preaching and teaching the Word of God, not just here and there, picking out convenient passages that will make all of us feel good about ourselves. I desire to preach the whole counsel of God. In that I think I am standing with my great mentor, in this case Paul, who in leaving the elders at Ephesus as recorded in Acts 20:[32] said, *“I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”* The inheritance in the Old Testament focused on the promised land of Canaan and the kingdom. For the Christian the inheritance is eternal life in Christ and the New Heaven and the New Earth. This is what the Lord has promised to us. You and I need to understand and come to the place where we actually believe and are able to operate according to the truth that we may lose all earthly things, but we have lost nothing essential for salvation. This is dramatically stated in Hebrews 10:34. There the author writes of those people, *“You joyfully accepted the plundering of you property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one... Yet a little while the coming One will come and will not delay, but my*

righteous one shall live by faith. And if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” I have been privileged to visit with two lovely ladies in our congregation. One of them is Carol Bernerd, who is just waiting for the Lord to take her. She has remained remarkably joyful through every descending level of her life. And the other is Betty Munn, who after her massive stroke, when she was still almost wholly paralyzed on the right side of her body, had the light of joy in her eyes. Do we pass the test? Have we let the love of God through the Word of God come into our hearts and our minds? Have we dwelt upon it, meditated upon it, made it into the inner structure of our soul and spirit so that under every adversity we are able to say, “It is well with me, for I am with God, and God has made me His own”?

Let us pray: Gracious Father in heaven, we are saved by grace, oh wonderful salvation! We walk by faith, o wondrous gift! It is in the obedience of faith that we discover the deeper realms and the higher heights of Your love for us. In the day of adversity, the day of loss, may we be found faithful, those who with joy receive what their Father in heaven has determined is best for them at that time and place. Bless our nation. Have mercy on the lost, bring them to their right senses. Open the eyes that we might at least follow common sense and do what is profitable and right and reflects Your justice and executes Your mercy. By Your grace, Father may we be a people who love righteousness again, and turn away from the empty philosophies and the vanities of the world. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.