

“MAJOR THEMES FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS: SUMMARY.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Sermon Texts: Amos 3:6-8; Hebrews 1:1-2; (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Introduction.

On the last Sunday of February we embarked on a study of the Minor Prophets, meaning the last twelve short books of the OT. They are minor in length not in importance or inspiration. They are God's Word spoken by men carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Tonight I would like to wrap up our study of the Minor Prophets with a summary of what we should take away from our time studying the Major Points from the Minor Prophets.

I want to do this in part to avoid the Cassandra Effect. You have probably never heard of the Cassandra Effect so you don't know what you should be avoiding.

The Cassandra Effect.

In ancient Greek mythology Cassandra was the daughter of King Priam of Troy. Troy you may recall was the city that came under attack by the Greeks in the Trojan War. Homer writes of this ten year war in his great epic poem, *The Iliad*. The war finally ended when the people of Troy fell for the Trojan Horse trick and pulled that giant wooden horse full of Greek soldiers inside the city gates. At night the Greek soldiers got out, opened the city gates and let the Greek army in to attack Troy.

Anyway, Cassandra was beautiful and caught the eye of Apollo, the Greek god who was a son of Zeus. To capture her affection Apollo gave Cassandra the gift of prophecy, the ability to accurately see and know the future. But when she spurned Apollo's love, in anger he cursed her with a curse that she could only see future tragedies and that no one would ever believe her. So when Cassandra foretold the fall of Troy and that the Trojan Horse contained Greek soldiers, no one heeded her words.

That has become known as the Cassandra Effect, knowing what is going to happen but no one believing it or taking it seriously. You might say that the flood in Noah's day was an example of the Cassandra Effect, he told what was going to happen but no one believed him. The more he warned and pleaded, the more the people rolled their eyes, gave a yawn, laughed at him and change the subject.

The prophets experienced this time and again all through OT history. Almost every prophet was ignored, mocked, ridiculed, accused of never saying anything nice, slandered and even killed.

God raised up over thirty prophets to call His people to faithfulness and righteousness. The Minor Prophets were the last of His prophets before 400 years of silence fell on the people. What does God have to do to make His voice heard? What does He have to do to get our attention? In hopes that we are listening I want to summarize what we have heard.

There are five major points or messages in the Minor Prophets.

(Basic outline adapted from John Blanchard's summary, *Major Points from the Minor Prophets*, p. 27-29.)

The prophets often used dramatic language and graphic images, so I will use five images to capture these five major points. Listen and believe.

First, The Roar of the Lion.

The lion is the king of the beasts, he rules the jungle. His roar is feared and with it he announces his presence. God is sometimes called the Lion of Judah. He rules and reigns over His creation and over all nations as the sovereign God.

Amos 3:7-8 “For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. 8 The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?”

The Prophets remind us that we do not live in a closed universe, but in an open universe. The Prophets reminds us that there is a God and He is here and He is not silent, He has spoken loud and clear.

And He is utterly, undeniably and absolutely sovereign.

Haggai 2:6 For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.

Psalms 135:5-7 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.
[6] Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.
[7] He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth,
who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.

Amos 3:6 Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid?
Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?

Isaiah 45:7 I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity,
I am the Lord, who does all these things.

Amos 3:8 The lion has roared; who will not fear?

Second, The Sound of the Trumpet.

Amos 3:6-8 Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid?

Jeremiah 6:17-19 I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘*Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!*’
But they said, ‘We will not pay attention.’

18 Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them.

19 Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices,
because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.

Zechariah 9:14 Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning;
the Lord ***God will sound the trumpet*** and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.

One of the purposes of the trumpet was to announce approaching trouble, an approaching army. God used the voices of the prophets to be His trumpet announcing God's inevitable judgment on sin.

The prophets declared as plainly as possible God's hatred of sin and just judgment on it. There is coming an inevitable great and terrible day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5).

Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes. (ESV)

Joel 3:12 ... I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

Amos 3:1-2 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, ...
2 "... therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (ESV)

People have always had a hard time believing that there is any kind of judgment coming. The people in Noah's day didn't believe it or heed the warnings. Even God's people to whom He sent numerous prophets didn't believe or listen to them.

People in every generation have ignored the warnings. "God's a loving God, not a God of judgment, nothing bad will happen."

God sends glimpses of great judgments in every age and generation. It is nothing for God to stir up a hurricane or a tsunami or an earthquake.

We should be humbled and sobered and trembling over the fierce power displayed in Hurricane Sandy. Even if some argue that that was not God's judgment, is it not a clear display of a very small portion of what God's power and judgment will be like?

You can tell the hardness of hearts and the deafness of ears and the blindness of eyes when the sovereign Lord roars and sounds His trumpet and no one listens, no one trembles, no one turns from his wicked ways.

Friends, you know don't you that what happened in the NE could just as easily happen in the NW? A major earthquake could level our community and we could be without power and water and food and the ability to get around.

There should be no small amount of trembling as we read the Minor Prophets. Again and again God announces a great and terrible judgment coming on all who are faithless and wicked, on all who reject Him and rebellion against Him and His will and His Word.

How many times must the trumpet sound and the people fail to listen? How long will we see and not see, hear and not hear? How many hints does God have to send before we will believe that there is a great and terrible and final judgment coming.

Third, The Ever-widening River of Mercy.

God's steadfast love and amazing grace and mercy flow like an ever-widening river through the pages of the prophets.

Prophet after prophet are God's messengers, God's ministers of God's mercy. When God raises up prophets and apostles and pastors and shepherds, it's mercy and grace. What if He didn't do it?

There have been times when He didn't you know as during the 400 years from Malachi to John the Baptist. God sends times of famine and drought, not just for crops, but for the Word of God. So when He sends rain and when He sends servants give thanks.

The Minor Prophets show us clearly both the severity and kindness (Romans 11:22) of our God.

Joel 2:13 ... Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Micah 7:18-20 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?

He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

19 He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

20 You will show faithfulness ...

Fourth, The Fervent Call to Repentance.

What more can the prophets say? How could they be clearer?

Zechariah 1:3 "Return to me ... and I will return to you."

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Joel 2:12-13 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
13 and rend your hearts and not your garments."

Their message is urgent and passionate. Repent lest you too perish. Turn back from your sin, stop compromising, seek holiness, seek the Lord while He may be found. Now is the time of repentance. Now is the time to return to the Lord while there is yet time.

Is this not the message of all the Scripture? Is this not what Jesus says is the message behind every calamity and disaster on earth. Repent lest you too perish (see Luke 13:1-5).

Fifth, The Certain Coming of the Messiah.

Jesus is the central figure behind the Prophets. All the prophets are used of God to announce a coming Messiah, a Son of David who will sit forever on David's throne.

The Minor Prophets point again and again to Christmas and Easter and Christ's second coming.

Micah 5:2-5 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. ...
4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.
5 And he shall be their peace.

The Prophets remind us what matters most. That there's a coming Messiah. God has invaded our world and come in the flesh. This matters supremely. This changes everything. This turns our world upside down. This changes how you and think about today and tomorrow and next week and the year ahead. God is moving and He is writing His history through our world and our lives.

Application and conclusion.

The lion has roared, the trumpet has sounded, the ever-widening river of mercy is flowing so let us heed the fervent call to repentance while there is time, for the Messiah of God has come as the final announcement, as the final voice of God before the end.

Avoid the Cassandra Effect, listen to God's Word, it is true and eternal, take it to heart and listen to the Holy Spirit.

In the words of Jesus in the last chapter of Revelation:

Revelation 22:6-7 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."
7 "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:20-21 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Prayer: Father, hear our prayers and our cries for mercy. Increase in us faith, deepen in us trust, and widen our hope, confident that you are God and you are completely in control of all things at all times and that nothing can overwhelm you or surprise you or separate us from you and your love for us in Christ Jesus.
And Father after the example of David and the testimony of your Scripture, by your just judgments send clear warning that all are without excuse if they don't repent. And comfort and save those who suffer for the sake of Jesus and deliver them out of the hand of their enemies.
Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer. Amen.