

‘Bothered!’ (Amos 6)

Bothered! This is word took on a new meaning when it was said in a certain way. This is because of certain comedy programmes. This is an example

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Bothered! We live in a world now that seems not to bother and so it says ‘Bothered, Am I bothered? Look at the face, is it bothered?’ Should we be bothered? Should we be bothered about certain things?

The other day I was in a meeting and a pastoral situation came up. It is immaterial what the situation was, but the discussion came down two people arguing different point. One person was arguing that to become a church member a person had to keep certain standards, at one point even the word ‘rules’ was mentioned. The other person said that Jesus came to show us love and to free us from the law and we are in danger of making so many rules that it is like living under the law. And during this discussion the passage from John 8 came up, as it often does at these times. John 8, verse 3, page 1073, but keep your finger in Amos 6.

“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?" "No-one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," ...” (John 8:3-11 NIV)

Jesus did not condemn the woman, so we should not be so judgemental in our assessment of others. We should not have rules. Then of course someone else pointed out the very last line which the first person forgot to mention or read.

“...Jesus declared to the woman. "Go now and leave your life of sin."”
(John 8:11 NIV)

Or other version say, **“Go and sin no more.”** For Jesus it seems as if moral ways were important, as was to free us from the law.

In the time of Amos religious errors were seen as important, along with moral errors. We have already seen in Amos that their morality, their treatment of the poor was condemned. This was when they were also being religious and doing all the right ceremonies, but these were condemned because of their attitudes which can be summed up in one word, said in a particular way, ‘Bothered! Are we bothered!’

From chapter 6 of Amos we gain four Principles
Never be Content – Verse 1 of Amos

“Woe 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! 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? You put off the evil day and bring near a reign of terror.”
(Amos 6:1-3 NIV)

They had grown contented and this is something that can so easily happen to us. We get into a groove and it becomes a rut, until it finally becomes a grave. They were content with how things are. This is not just to change things for the sake of change, but to realise that we are sinful and imperfect and so can develop bad habits.

It is the sort of thing we do all the time. I can remember less than ten years ago, a friend of ours qualified as a driving instructor. She then used to pick you up on all the bad habits that people had developed over the years of driving.

So we never get it completely right, unless of course complacency steps in and this means that we could not be bothered if we are right or wrong!

I'm all Right, Jack is Bad – this comes in the next verses of Amos 6. Verse 4

“You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.”
(Amos 6:4-7 NIV)

There were poor all around them, but they were living in luxury. There were not bothered about those around them that were worse off than them. They spent their time in lazing around, drinking wine in bowls rather than glasses, eating choice lamb which was really decadent because they would wait for the lamb to grow up before they killed it, so that it would feed more people at the same time.

But it is so easy to fall into that trap. Leslie Newbiggin, a minister who was a great man, author and churchman tells of the time when he went with others to a church conference on world poverty and hunger. At the conference there was the world's press and they began their session at ten in the morning. And the morning was talking about different areas of the globe that were suffering due to famine and so were hungry. When lunchtime came the delegates and press entered the dining room for a buffet lunch and the tables were bowing under the weight of the food. This food was piled high. So a reporter approached Leslie Newbiggin and asked him, “What is the conference on?”

“World Poverty and Hunger,” Leslie replied. And so on into the afternoon where more speeches were heard on World Poverty and Hunger. And then came tea. Again it was a buffet meal, and again the table was heaving with food, piled high. The same reporter came up to Newbiggin and said, “What is the conference on?”

“World Poverty and Hunger – abolish it” replied Leslie. “Why?”

“Because I can’t wait until you have your conference on the abolition of the sex trade!”

It is all too easy to fall into the trap of ignoring the welfare of others, whilst you have time to compose songs and pamper oneself. But beware for you will fall and it will end. God has said so. We must be bothered about others. Remember Jesus said Love God with everything and love your neighbour as yourself. This is being bothered about others, especially those in the same fellowship, the same church.

God Dictates, Not You – The third principle is that God dictates how things are to work, not us. Verse 7

“Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.”

“The Sovereign LORD has sworn by himself—the LORD God Almighty declares: "I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; I will deliver up the city and everything in it." If ten men are left in one house, they too will die. And if a relative who is to burn the bodies comes to carry them out of the house and asks anyone still hiding there, "Is anyone with you?" and he says, "No," then he will say, "Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD."” (Amos 6:7-10 NIV)

The people were full of pride and so were not bothered about a true relationship with God. In fact their relationship was so bad that the name of the Lord must not be mentioned.

We all want peace, we covet peace, but it is God who says how it is to happen, it is God who tells us how to live, it is God who must come first. So often we want the peace, but not to follow what God wants and then we blame God when the peace does not happen.

I can’t be bothered to live how God wants me to. I have had people say to me, “I am a Christian and I know that I am living in a way that God does not want me to live, that is not biblical, but I am still going to do it anyway.” That is not allowing God to dictate the terms, that is me dictating the terms. Are we really wanting to follow God or are not really not bothered!

Moral Considerations are Important – And finally this evening we have that moral considerations are to be placed above everything else. Verse 11

“For the LORD has given the command, and he will smash the great house into pieces and the small house into bits. Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plough there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness— you who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debar and say, "Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?" For the LORD God Almighty declares, "I will stir up a nation against you, O house of Israel, that will oppress you all the way from Lebo Hamath to the valley of the Arabah.” (Amos 6:11-14 NIV)

In the passage there is great irony, even sarcasm. Horses cannot run up craggy hills, they are built for flat places. The same with trying to plough with oxen in the same craggy hills – useless. So why go after a poor form of morality, when God’s is the best.

But placing moral considerations above all else, does that not place it about God and our relationship with God? We say that the important thing is not what we do, but our relationship with God. That is true, but coming out of our relationship with God should come our moral code. This would mean that we put morality up there because it shows how close we are to God.

When a person is not as close to God as they could be, it does show up in the way they treat others – their moral considerations. So at times we need to examine ourselves and

- Never be content with things as they are – this is complacency and we are fallible
- Put the welfare of others before pampering of self – note it is not welfare of others over ourselves, but of pampering ourselves
- Covet peace with God and allow him to dictate the terms – we are following God, not God at our bid and call
- Place moral considerations above everything else – this shows the state of our relationship with God.

Today morals at times are a dirty word. They are a thing of the past. But with God they are important and the people in the days of Amos forgot that, may we never do that either. Yes, Jesus did come to set us free and show us a way of love, but it is also a way of justice another way of saying morals, of living a certain way..

As one person said at the Baptist Assembly this year:

- Is it the way of love or justice to protect a wife who is being battered by her husband?
- Is it the way of love or justice to try and end the sex slave trade in certain countries in the far East?

The list could go on. But an attitude of Bothered! Am I bothered, do I look bothered! Is never the way of Christ.