

# the road less traveled

amos 3

Robert Frost's famous poem *The Road Not Taken* begins with these lines:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth*

Many, many times in the Bible we are presented with the choice of taking one of two roads in life, each with its own attributes and each with a destination. In Genesis we see it demonstrated by Abraham and Lot, who each chose which land they would settle in chapter 13. In Exodus we see the Children of Israel vacillating between desiring the road to Canaan with its milk and honey and the road to Egypt, with its leeks and garlic. In Joshua and Judges you see the leaders of God's people again and again imploring them to go in the way of the Lord, rather than the way of the world. The book of Psalms opens up with a discussion about the way of the righteous and the way of the ungodly. In Proverbs we read verses like this one:

**Proverbs 14.12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**

Those are just a few examples of the fact that over and over again the Bible presents life to us as the path we're on, leading to one of two destinations: life or death. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me." We're hit hard with this principle.

The paths of life comes into view in our chapter this morning as God continues to lay out His case against His people in Amos 3.

**Amos 3.1-15 - Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it? Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy? "Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, And in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: 'Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; See great tumults in her midst, And the oppressed within her. For they do not know to do right,' Says the Lord, 'Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.' " Therefore thus says the Lord God: "An adversary shall be all around the land; He shall sap your strength from you, And your palaces shall**

**be plundered.” Thus says the Lord: “As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion Two legs or a piece of an ear, So shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria – In the corner of a bed and on the edge of a couch! Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,” Says the Lord God, the God of hosts, “That in the day I punish Israel for their transgressions, I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel; And the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end,” Says the Lord.**

It’s wonderful that even in a message of judgment we can see a great amount of tenderness from the Lord.

First of all, we learn about His longsuffering and His mercy by the simple fact that He sends warning before judgment. God always announces His plans ahead of time so that the people of earth have an opportunity to repent and call out to Him. Rahab. The Ninevites. The leaders during Ezra’s time. God does not delight in judgment or in the death of the wicked, but is tender hearted, loving mercy.

We see that, despite the Israelites faithlessness, the Lord would spare a remnant. We’ll see this explained much more at the end of the book, but there in verse 12 we see that through this coming affliction, God would preserve a portion of His people, though they may seem to be just an ear or a leg in the mouth of a lion. But God, in His kindness, would not utterly destroy the Israelites, even though they had so maliciously broken their relationship with Him. We see that God is full of mercy and grace.

But, on top of all that, we see the Lord talking in verses 1 and 2 about how He considered the Nation of Israel to be His family. And if we stop to consider the intimacy of these words, it should impress us with how loving and how personal God is. Our God *really* loves us as His family. He says of His people, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” And He demonstrates there His personality and His intimate, familiar love that He has for those who He has called.

And, from a family point of view, we learn that God is a very involved Father. He’s not a deadbeat dad. He’s not an absent Father. He’s tender and full and focused on us.

But God’s people had forgotten this. Certainly it’s something we’re prone to forget as well. To the Jews, God had become impersonal. Their faith was cultural. They went to the Temple. They even performed some of the rituals. But their was no relationship. There was no desire for God and for Godliness. God, who from the beginning has wanted relationship, had become like every other deaf and dumb idol in their minds. And even though the Lord had been very clear that there were consequences for sin and that He would correct them when they went astray, they stopped believing it. Because God was no longer a living, moving, feeling Person to them.

“We have the Temple. That’s what matters! God can’t destroy us because, after all, He lives over in that little building over there.” And we see how, like in the story of the prodigal son, the people had abandoned all their love and respect and reverence and friendship with the father.

And the Lord here, loving them still, was reminding them of His care and His concern for them and the relationship that He had constructed for them.

This is what God wants for His people. It's what He wanted with Adam and Eve. It's what He wanted with Abraham. It's what He wanted with Israel. It's what He wanted with His disciples. It's what He wants for us and for His Church. That we walk together. That we take a road together toward the destination He has in mind. And that that walk would be personal and intimate and relational. That we would progress as we go with Him and move toward the completion we talked about back in our studies of Philipians. This is God's desire, revealed even in a message of coming judgment.

But here's the problem - it's summed up in verse 3:

### **Amos 3.3 - Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?**

There we have the summary of this entire book. I feel like so much is revealed there. God saying, "We're supposed to be walking together. And I have somewhere that I'm going. And you're going somewhere else. And that can't happen. It doesn't work." By definition, if 2 people want to walk together, they have to agree. Hills and turns and crossways have to be taken together. Otherwise, the two are no longer together anymore!

And I think this is a healthy reminder for all of us. That God has a route that He's taking. In a sense we could say that God is going places. And God knows where He's going. You know, to the Jews God said, "This is the land, this is the plan. Go here, live there, flourish there, serve me there."

For Believers in the New Testament, including you and I, God hasn't given a specific earthly land or region, but instead His plan and His calling is this: *Follow Me!*

That's what Jesus said when He called people while He was on the earth. Follow Me. He didn't go to Peter and James and John and look at them and say, "Talk about Me," or, "Believe Me." Now, when a person follows Jesus they *do* believe Him and they *do* talk about Him. Peter and James and John did all of that. But the call was to **follow**. To start walking. To go together in agreement with where Jesus was going and what He was doing toward a destination that Christ had in mind.

And to me, Amos 3.3 is a great reminder of what my life is supposed to be about. It's a great focus point. I want this to be the next verse I memorize and realize that it is God who is speaking it to me so that I can evaluate what I'm doing and where I'm going.

Now, obviously the primary message of this chapter is God's coming judgment on the sin of His people. And so, if we have unresolved sin in our lives, it's important that we understand God is going to judge it. If we find ourselves doing things God has said not to do, or failing to do things God has asked us to do, then we need to heed the warning we've received here and deal with it. Those things we've already seen talked about in the first two chapters. We need to deal with discompassion. We need to deal with greed. We need to deal with sexual impurity. Those things are incompatible with Godliness.

But then, beyond that, after repent of sin, we can focus our lives on the message of verse 3. Because right now we are on a walk with the Lord and God *has* a destination in mind. He has place He wants to bring us. And if we understand that I think it will reveal to us that often times the selfishness in our hearts tries to make God follow us. It's not that we don't believe God or want to be in relationship with Him, but in our hearts we have this tendency to try to make God follow after us, rather than the other way around.

"Lord, bless me in all the endeavors I want to do, and overlook the principles that I'm not very interested in."

This is why part of what we call the Lord's prayer says, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." It's not that we're giving God permission. It's a reminder *for ourselves!* God's will *IS* going to be done. It's being done in heaven and it's being done on the earth. God *IS* establishing His Kingdom on the earth and we're invited to be a part of what God is doing. To follow Him to that destination. To be connected with Him and used by Him and filled up by Him.

But, as we always point out and as is clear from the pages of Scripture, the Lord will not force us to follow. Even when we're saved. Even when He's bought us and made us His own, God does not force us to do the things He's asked us to do. Look at the Israelites. Look at the Rich Young Ruler. Look at any of the patriarchs or the disciples.

What we need to understand is that God really does want relationship with us. And relationship means going where He's going. It means answering the call on God's terms. And His terms are to follow after Him. To choose to leave other pursuits behind so that we can pursue and enjoy Him. That's the deal.

And when we look at this Bible that God has given us, we find out where He's going. We find out where He's leading us. Of course, He's leading us to eternity. He's leading us to heaven. But we find that He's also leading us to self-sacrifice, not selfishness. He's leading us to servanthood, not arrogance. He's taking us on a path that leads to life. Psalm 1.

But this path God has called us to, the narrow road that Jesus talked about, has to be chosen and embarked upon. When God's people don't want to go God's way, He will let them. He warns us about it. He reaches out and tries to spare us from the path that leads to destruction, but we see that even God's people sometimes move in a direction away from the Lord. Look at Lot. Look at Jonah. Look at the Church at Laodicia. But when God's people choose to not go God's way, they're on that path that Proverbs talks about. The road that leads to destruction. And, though God comes to rescue them, often all that is left is a few legs and a part of an ear.

What the Lord wants for His people is so much more and so much better. It's the opposite of what we can bring to ourselves. And, because of that, God has explained in His word that there are 2 roads we can travel on. His direction or the opposite. Those are our options. Christ says to us, "Follow Me!" Or, as this principle is explained in Deuteronomy chapter 30:

**Deuteronomy 30.19 - I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.**

Take the road less traveled today. Spend some quality Father/Son time as you follow the Lord wherever He goes.