



*Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession...Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer -*

### PROCLAMATION POINTS

*The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.*

#### Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

Being a believer in God and in his ways is a call to a *counter-cultural* life. Those who lived in Israel in the time of the prophet Amos were ones who had forgotten that truth. Instead, they pursued only worldly ideals — amassing wealth for themselves and indulging in the so-called “good things in life.”

The prophet Amos spoke to them the Word of the Lord. By their selfish actions, those who sought to live comfortable lives were oppressing the poor, taking bribes, and turning true justice into bitter wickedness. The call of Amos to the people was: “Seek the Lord and live!” (Amos 5:6). By not seeking the Lord and showing true repentance, Israel was headed for sure and certain death.

- *When we are in the throes of sin and have no desire to turn from our wicked ways, why is hearing the truth so distasteful?*
- *Ironically, how is selfishness and lack of concern for others the source of our own downfall?*

It is no different for our “first world” societies today; most of us live lives of great wealth and affluence compared to the nations of the world that are severely impoverished, who often exist on less than \$1000 per capita per year.

The lure of wealth and status is a mighty foe. It is a spiritual temptation that leads many astray. The so called “good life” and dreams for larger homes, bigger bank accounts, and more material possessions is an attractive dream, to be sure. But is it the “life” of which the prophet speaks?

In biblical terms, the true “life” (*cha-ya* in Hebrew) is a life lived according to the will of God. This “life” is a real, authentic, spirit-filled, God-directed life. It is a life that cares for the other, the poor, widowed, orphaned, and outcast. It is a life that is supported and sustained by the Creator himself!

- *When do you feel most “alive?” Is it when you are focused on yourself, or when you are focused on God’s will, serving others, and being centered in Christ? What’s the difference?*
- *How difficult (or easy) do you find it to live a life that is counter-cultural?*

#### Psalms 90:12-17

“Establish the work of our hands,” says the psalmist (v.17). Our most important “work” as children of God is to serve and glorify the creator with all we do. This is not a prayer for a new job or for something valuable we might contribute to society. This is a plea for the Spirit of God to inspire our

hearts, minds, and hands to lift up the name of the Lord in prayer and praise, and in every aspect of our human lives.

- *In what ways do you see your congregation lifting up the name of the Lord in tangible ways that your neighbors can see? What is the benefit to others when we are obedient to the command to worship and serve our creator?*

#### Hebrews 3:12-19

If sin is anything, it is deceptiveness. The author of Hebrews warned his audience not to fall into rebellion and forsake the living God. A prime biblical example of this stubborn rebellion was the Israelites on their forty year wilderness journey to the promised land. The Israelites knew they were on their way to a better life, yet they got impatient and grew weary of the journey.

- *In what way is spiritual “hardness of heart” often related to weariness and impatience? What do you do when you realize you are in that cranky, fussy state of mind and heart?*
- *How do we keep our eyes on Christ when it seems that God is “taking too long?”*

#### Mark 10:17-22

A rich man inquired of Jesus how he might receive eternal life. He addressed Jesus as “good teacher.” In Greek the word is *αγαθοεργος* (*a-gah-tho-air-gos*) which literally means, “one who does good work.” Beneath the man’s words were an assumption that he and Jesus were both “good” people, working toward the same goal. But Jesus pointed to the difference between them. Though the man did not know it, he was speaking to the only One who was truly “Good.” To prove his point, Jesus ordered the young man to do the one “work” he knew this man could not and would not do.

- *Why do we sometimes want to justify ourselves saying things like, “I’m a good person. Look how well I’ve done?”*
- *Have you ever clung so tightly to “something” that it detracted you from your relationship with Christ? Did you know it at the time? How does this misdirected desire give evidence of our sin?*

Mark tells us that Jesus loved the man. He saw what the man lacked and pointed it out to him.

- *In what ways does Jesus point to what you lack? Do you trust him enough to pay attention to what is keeping you from following him?*