

AMOS AND COMFORTABLE LIVING

(Amos 6 and 2 Timothy 3.1-6)

Warning signs- road works; falling rocks; wild animals (story of sitting below falling rocks sign).

Can we see warning signs in our lives today? What do we do about them? OT prophets - warning signs in their day:

Amos 6v.1- complacency= warning about their focus on self-satisfaction.

- Fine furniture - (abuse of ivory)
- Food
- Music- verse 5 – insight- sing idle songs, mimicked temple music - made jest of it- bantered it
- Entertainment not focused on the Lord
- Alcohol excess
- Finest lotions

Verses 3- 6 Message Bible**

People with an Extravagant Lazy Lifestyle

People in a bubble (cf: Westminster bubble) is a characterization of members of the parliament as being isolated from life outside parliament) a party leader said when he was appointed a few years ago that - he wished to be a "leader outside the Westminster bubble."
Bubble of comfortable living; there can be other bubbles too - e.g. work or playing or watching sport.

V6- could not see the warning signs- you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph (both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah).

Could not see or heed the warnings of exile and judgement.

Challenge to us today re: our lifestyle- does our lifestyle make it difficult for us to see or hear God's warning signs? Are we in a bubble?

We have much to be thankful for in this country- freedom of worship, peace, security, running water, food, clothing good housing and much more.

How much of our time and attention goes to improving our lifestyle? Linda and I were challenged a number of years ago... Focussed on going to a restaurant - getting there on time; good meal; going in - no Luke- found him talking to a gentleman of the road near some dustbins - we had not noticed the man. What are the warning signs for us today?

Our Area - Poverty, Life Expectancy

Stockton borough has the greatest inequality in male life expectancy in the country. Men in central Stockton can now expect to live 16.4 years less in central Stockton compared to Eaglescliffe and the gap for women is 11 years. This has changed little since the 1930's.

- Some of the worst areas of social deprivation in European Union are in the Tees valley/east Durham
- Smoking, alcohol, drugs - see in A&E
- Food banks - collecting points in supermarkets – challenge

This week the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote in an article.

"A few years ago, I met a man who had recently been out of work for 18 months. He had been laid off in a downturn, but was highly motivated and eager to play a full part in supporting his family. As there was a good level of demand for his particular trade, he wanted to set up his own small business.

But it had taken him no fewer than 18 months to find the necessary capital to purchase tools and equipment, and to put his van back on the road. In the end, he received a loan from a micro-finance social enterprise, which he repaid almost instantly. And by the time I met him, he had a five-month order book and was working very hard indeed, absolutely delighted with the direction life was taking. The loan, which had enabled him to get his business up and running, was for £200.

Capitalism that cannot find £200 for a highly-motivated individual, with good skills, is simply not adequate to the task of creating a stable society."

He went on to say that Jesus Christ reached out to include all humanity in salvation.

Our nation - materialism and lack of focus on God

Cf- 2 Timothy 3.2-4 many parallels with our society today

Our world- global warming/ climate change.

War: ISIS - Syria and Iraq - severe persecution.

Terrorism in Tunisia, Kuwait and France.

Refugees - asylum seekers.

Easy to be in our own bubble- without noticing what is happening locally, nationally or internationally.

Can we also see signs that all is not well with our individual contacts- friends, families or work colleagues- suffering, depression, difficulties and under pressures.

So what should we be doing about the warning signs?

If we take the analogy of the road signs a little further, road works ahead are often followed by a speed limit (or average speed limit).

Time to slow down - likewise when we are busy in life - slow down to think and hear what God is saying.

After the speed limit signs there may be signs to tell us to keep going ahead but through narrow lanes or alternatively they may be a road closed and diversion sign.

Is God calling us to proceed ahead but stay closer to him and carry on in a similar direction but do things differently - to follow a narrow way?

God will only ask a few of us to give up our running water, houses, good jobs and way of life to follow him. However there may be a new direction for us that God is guiding us to through his Holy Spirit. He does require

us to check where our focus is and the direction we are going in with the time energy and resources he has blessed us with.

As well as a challenge concerning how we use our time and resources a call for us to commit to pray regularly- that could be for any of the negative situations – our area, our nation, other parts of the world, friends or family who are struggling. A call to be informed and prayerfully support Christians who are active in these areas.

St Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "Ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you remembering in you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the glorious father may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation."

Prayer - help us to see and hear what you are saying to us today and apply to our lives.