



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Amos 9:11-15

December 3, 2017
English Standard Version

“The Audacity of Hope”

The 1st Sermon in an Advent series
“Christmas with the Minor Prophets”

Open your copy of God’s Word with me to Amos, chapter 9. If you’re not sure where Amos is, open your Bibles in the middle, go right and the Minor Prophets come after the Major Prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. And Amos is the third Minor Prophet, after Hosea and Joel. And they’re not called Minor Prophets because they’re less important, but because their books are shorter. The Major Prophets are bigger books, the Minor Prophets are smaller books. So, hopefully, that bought you enough time to get to **Amos 9**. Please listen carefully, as this is God’s Word.

Amos 9:11-15

“In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old,¹² that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name,” declares the LORD who does this.¹³ “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.¹⁴ I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.¹⁵ I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,” says the LORD your God.”

Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. We need to be reminded of what Advent prepares us for! We need to look forward to the coming of the King. We need to not be so self-absorbed that it eats away at our faith. We need to rest assured that Your promises are true and

that what You promise, You will do. Enable us this day, to set our hope on Christ. And so we pray, by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, in His name we pray, amen.

INTRODUCTION: “Reverse the Curse” ¹

Some of you **may know** that I’m a fan of the Boston Red Sox. ... And the last 13 years have seen the Red Sox win three World Championships. And while all of those have been great, nothing compares with the first one, back in 2004. You see, for the previous 86 years, the Red Sox had been suffering under a **curse**. Commonly known as **The Curse of the Bambino**, the **curse** was a superstition **thoroughly accepted** in New England. Most fans took it seriously, as it explained the failure of Red Sox to win the World Series from 1918 to 2004. This misfortune began after the Red Sox sold the greatest player in history, **Babe Ruth**, *The Great Bambino*, to the hated New York Yankees. Before that, the Red Sox had been one of the most successful baseball franchises, winning the first World Series and amassing five World Series titles. After the sale, they went without a title for decades, even though they won four American League championships. And to make matters worse, with the addition of Babe Ruth, the previously lackluster Yankees went on to become the most successful franchise in baseball. **The curse** became a focal point of the Red Sox –Yankees rivalry for years and years.

The Curse of the Bambino ran deep in Boston sports until the 2004 Playoffs. Here it was said that the *“curse was reversed”* after the completion of an impossible comeback against (you guessed it!) the New York Yankees in the American League Championship Series. The Yankees had taken a 3-0 series lead with a commanding 19-8 victory in game three. Sox fans **lost all hope**. They’d given up because, not only had a team never come back from a 3-game deficit, but they had to do it against the same team that beat them exactly one year earlier.

Just because the fans called it a season doesn’t mean that’s how they felt in the Red Sox clubhouse. Things were looking grim for the Red Sox towards the end of Game 4. They were headed into the bottom of the ninth trailing 4-3 when Kevin Millar stepped to the plate. Facing Yankees All-Star closer, Mariano Rivera, he was able to draw a walk and get the buzz back in Fenway Park. As soon as he got on base Dave Roberts came in to pinch-run. This set the stage for one of the most memorable moments of the entire season. With Roberts on first, Bill Mueller came up to bat. On the first pitch, Roberts took off for second sliding in safely. This left Mueller at the plate with the tying run on second. After fighting off a couple of pitches, he connected with a line drive which scored Roberts from second, tying the game up. The fireworks didn’t end there, flash to **the bottom of the 12th**. David Ortiz comes up to bat with one man on. And he sent one over the right field fence for a 2-run walk off homer. The Red Sox won, and their historic comeback had officially begun. Game 5 saw another David Ortiz walk off. Game 6 was the famous “Bloody Sock” game of Curt Schilling. Game 7 saw a Johnny Damon grand slam. The Red Sox came back from a 0–3 deficit to beat the Yankees in a best-of-seven series and then went on to sweep the St. Louis Cardinals to win the 2004 World Series.

The curse had been such a part of Boston culture that when a *“reverse curve”* road sign on Longfellow Bridge, over busy Storrow Drive, was graffitied to read *“Reverse the Curse,”* officials left it in place until after the Red Sox won. After the last game of the Series that year, in celebration the road sign was edited to read *“Curse Reversed.”* **The Curse of the Bambino** was

¹ The Introduction is taken from numerous news articles about that most magnificent season.

finally over, and a new age had begun for Red Sox baseball. The Sox went on to win the Series two more times, and when you add in the success of the Bruins, Celtics, and Patriots, you would have ten rings in the last 16 years.

So ... what does all that have to do with the Old Testament Book of Amos? More than you might think. You see, Amos is one of the **hardest** books in the Old Testament to read as it's **a book of judgment**. God calls the prophet Amos to go to the people of Israel and tell them, like the Red Sox, that they're going to have **86 years of judgment**. They will be **cursed** by God. Why? Well, to answer that question forces us to ask two more questions, namely ...

BACKGROUND: Who is Amos and What's the Problem? ²

There's not much in our society today like the prophets. The Old Testament prophets are to society what the Allied planes were to the POW camps in WWII, what radio broadcasts were behind the Iron Curtain, what fax traffic was to China in the days of Tiananmen Square, and what the Internet is today to the Persecuted Church. They let people know **what's really going on**. Prophets see who God is, and what He's up to, and then they come with a message. They stand and preach in the face of criticism, and abuse, and apathy because **they have no choice**. **GOD** has sent them. And, as **Psalm 50:3** says, "*Our God comes; He does not keep silence; before Him is a devouring fire, around Him a mighty tempest.*" The writings of the Prophets take up more space in the Bible than anything else. The sheer volume and weight of their words should tell us that God loves to show Himself and that He has a great deal to say. God speaks, and the Prophets get up, go out, and deliver the message.

These books will chip away at our hard hearts, reveal our lack of mercy, scrutinize our faith ... and then stretch it, make us **long** for better days ... and then give us **hope** for those days ... because they have been promised **by the God who speaks**. They confront us with the powerful themes of the Sovereignty of God, God's love and forgiveness, our need for faith and repentance, and God's demand that we **listen** to His Word, take it seriously enough to **believe** it, and then exercise **real hope** that what God says ... He will do. And **hopefully**, we'll learn those things. We're going to spend **this Advent** reading, looking, and learning from a few of the Minor Prophets. And we're going to start with the Book of Amos.

Now Amos is what we call one of the 8th Century Prophets. In the 8th Century, approximately 798 to 722 B.C., Israel was doing pretty well, or so she thought. At this time, approximately 200 years after King David, his Kingdom had been split into two: Judah in the south and Israel in the north. King Uzziah reigned in Judah and King Jeroboam II reigned in Israel for over 40 years each. Amos lived in times of **material prosperity**. The long reigns of the two kings had brought **stability, prosperity, and expansion** to the two kingdoms.

The Southern Kingdom had subdued the Philistines to the west, the Ammonites to the east, and the Arab states to the south. The Northern Kingdom, to whom Amos' message was

2 The Background and exposition of the text is adapted from the books Unexpected Wisdom: Major Insights from the Minor Prophets by Dan Schmidt, pages 92-110; Plain Talk on the Minor Prophets by Manfred George Gutzke, pages 35-50; LESSONmaker: Introduction and Background of Amos, WordSearch software, NAVPress; Amos, Hosea, Micah – An Archaeological Commentary by Philip King, page 21; Bible Knowledge Commentary, Introduction to Amos by Donald R. Sunukjian; Old Testament Survey Series: The Minor Prophets by Dr. James Smith; The Message of Amos: The Day of the Lion by Dr. James A. Motyer, pages 201-208; **My sermon "AMOS - A Lesson on Good and Bad Fear" preached here on 6/22/03. **And the Sermons**, "The Message of Amos: Does God Care?" by Dr. Mark Dever, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC, 6/8/2003; "Audacity of Hope" by Dr. Sean Michael Lucas, preached when Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, MS, 11/29/15, www.fpcpca.net; and "Healer of the World" by Dr. Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 12/9/07, The Tim Keller Sermon Archive, Logos Bible Software 7.11.**

directed, was at the height of its power. Aram, her enemy to the north, had been defeated in 802 B.C. by Assyria. Assyria, however, had been unable to press her advantage because of a succession of inept rulers until the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III in 745 B.C. It's now 750 B.C., so the Assyrians, the people Jonah went to, are now only five years away from once again **becoming a dominant world power**. But for now, Israel controlled the trade routes, and so wealth began to accumulate in her cities. Throughout the Book of Amos, we read that commerce thrived, an upper class emerged, and expensive homes were built. There's a lot of evidence of **prosperity** in this book, but with this came **corruption, injustice** toward the poor, drunkenness, and religious **apostasy**. The rich enjoyed an idle, indulgent lifestyle, while the poor became targets for legal and economic exploitation. Slavery for debt was easily accepted. Standards of morality had sunk to new lows.

Meanwhile religion flourished. Amos tells us that the people thronged to the shrines for the yearly festivals, enthusiastically offering their sacrifices. They steadfastly maintained that **God** was with them, and considered themselves **immune** to disaster. All because **prosperity** was thought to be a fruit of faithful observance of the law, and since the people were prosperous, they made **the fatal assumption** that they were religiously good. And so, it must have been immensely difficult to proclaim that the people were **guilty** according to the law, and that God was about to bring **destruction** to the nation. Amos's role is as a simple Judean shepherd. But God told him to go and prophesy, and he had to obey. He was told to cross the border into Israel to proclaim a message of **judgment** for the nation if she did not return to the true worship of God and abide by His covenant.

The book of Amos is a series of messages brought to God's people. These people had been called by God to be His own, but they had become so preoccupied with the daily round of duties we call life that they had forgotten about God. Oh sure, they **still** went to church, **still** said the prayers, **still** offered the praises, but **darkness** had **settled** over their hearts and they were just going through the motions with little faith and no repentance. And **they thought** that going through the motions was enough. But **God** did not.

And so, He sends them a prophet with a word directly from God. Amos is given this task. He is to **remind** the people, **reason** with them, even **argue** with them to get them to **respond** to the very things they **already knew** to be true about God. He was to preach to people who **thought** they knew God. I mean, **they** kept up the religious practices, **they** offered the sacrifices, **they** went to the temple, and **they** performed their rituals. But **they** didn't really **mean** any of it. And Amos came to warn them that God would not tolerate insincere worship; that He was looking at their hearts, and **their hearts** were far from Him. And so, Amos was to deliver a message. It's the message of the Old Testament. It's the message of the New Testament. It's the word of all prophets ... **Repent**.

And so Amos came ... and He hammers them ... **God hates their wealth, Amos 3:15**, *"I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end," declares the LORD.* **God hates their women, Amos 4:1**, *"Hear this word, you fat cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink!'"* You ever heard a woman called a "fat cow"? Well, now you know where that phrase comes from. God said it first. **God hates their men, Amos 6:1, 4-7**, *"Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the*

nations, to whom the house of Israel comes! ... ⁴ “Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs ... ⁵ who sing idle songs ... ⁶ who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! ⁷ Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass away.”

So this is what the prophet Amos saw when he looked over the land of Israel — a pampered upper class, living off the misery of the poor, and contemplating on their comfortable beds how to indulge their expensive tastes, while at the same time crowding into church week by week to praise God in the belief that their prosperity and comfort must be a sign that God was pleased with them. But God was not pleased. **God hates their false religion, Amos 5:21-23**, “*I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ²² Even though you offer Me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. ²³ Take away from Me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.*”

Can you see why this book is so hard to read? It’s eight and a half chapters **of judgment!** Just one blast after another. It’s a **frightening** book, one filled with messages of **condemnation** and **judgment**. At one point, in chapter 7, God shows Amos visions of terrible **destruction** by locusts and fire. It wasn’t a pretty picture. In fact, the last thing we read before we get to our passage says, **Amos 9:8-10**, “*Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,*” declares the LORD. ⁹ “*For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth. ¹⁰ All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.’”* The pronouncements of **judgment** pile up until the picture is **so dark** that you want to put the book down and never open it again. But if you do that, you’d miss an incredibly important part of the book. And those are the last four verses, and that, finally, brings us to our passage for today. **Amos 9:11-15** tells us that **God** is going to fix everything. **God** is going to set things right. **God** is going to restore Israel. And we see that in four specific ways, the first of which is

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v. 11: THE KING RESTORED

*“In that day I will raise up **the booth of David** that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old,”*

So, with all the words of judgment, it would be incredibly **audacious** to **hope** that somehow, God is going to bring good out of this. **He’s** told them **He** hates them, **He** hates their false faith, **He** hates their evil ways, **He’s** going to destroy them, **He’s** going to let many of them die, and **He’s** going to let the rest be sent into exile. How can we possibly **hope** that any of this is going to turn out all right? One commentator said that it’s possible to **hope** because the **transition** from **verse 10**, “*All the sinners of My people shall die...*” to **verse 11**, “*In that day I will raise up the booth of David ...*” is the most **abrupt transition** in Amos, and perhaps, in the Bible. It’s a **transition** from hatred to love, from lies to truth, from death to life. Amos wants us to know that God Himself is going to initiate this **transition**. That after the judgment, after all the death and destruction and exile, God has promised that He will “*raise up the booth of David.*”

The once powerful house of David was but a booth in the days of Amos. Now, these booths recall the Feast of Booths found in Leviticus 23, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. And these booths were simply a form of a tent, put up for the feast, but just temporary, they would be short-lived, and then taken down. And the imagery here of *the booth of David* is that **it's about to come down**. **The time** of feasting, **the time** of gladness, **the time** of prosperity is over.

But the reality is that the House of David, the Davidic kingship, the line of the Messiah as promised in 2nd Samuel ... had already started to fall apart. Ten of the tribes had refused to recognize the authority of the Davidic rulers in 931 B.C. They formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel to whom Amos was preaching. And yet, the Davidic booth, as pitiful as it was in the days of Amos, would experience further calamity. At some point it would totally collapse. The last descendant of David to rule in Jerusalem was Zedekiah. He was removed from the throne and was carried into captivity in 586 B.C. At that point, it could be said, at least metaphorically, that the Davidic booth had fallen.

And yet here God promises that one day He would *“repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old.”* The plural usage suggests that the term *“booth”* in the previous line actually refers to the people of God, even though they were currently divided into two kingdoms. In the future, the nation would be united again under one king who is called *“David,” Hosea 3:5, “Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to His goodness in the latter days.”* This future *“David”* is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Though David's house had received considerable blows, it would not perish. The Lord would honor the promise which He'd made through the prophet Nathan in **2 Samuel 7**. And now the promise goes one step further. God would rebuild the house of David *“as in the days of old.”* The reference is to the glorious days when the House of David, under King Solomon, was the leading kingdom in the region. And Jesus, who would be the fulfillment of these promises, went even beyond Amos when He declared, **Matthew 12:42b**, *“and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”* Do you see the grace in this passage? When things are at their worst, when the situation is darkest, when there's no possibility of restoration, **when there's no hope ... God shows up**. This is what grace does. God, in His grace, comes when all seems dark, and He stirs our hearts to **hope again**. To recklessly, foolishly, **audaciously ... hope again**. And what are they hoping for? The restoration of the King. The raising up of the House of David. The rebuilding of the Kingdom. Amos is telling them that God is promising them ... that **the King is coming!** But not only will the King be restored, but the second way in which God is going to set things right is by having ...

v. 12: THE REALM EXPANDED

“...that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name,” declares the LORD who does this.”

The purpose of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom was so that the true sons of Israel — those who survived the judgment — would take possession of *“the remnant of Edom.”* Edom, Israel's neighbor and enemy, would be incorporated into the kingdom of Messiah. The remnant of Edom in this promise is **a specific example of a general principle**. The restored Davidic kingdom — under the reign of Christ — would include of *“all the nations who are called by My name.”* The reference is to all those who hear the word of the Lord and who, by faith, are incorporated into the true Israel of God. The messianic kingdom would become the

means of reaching the nations of the world with the claims of Christ. Those nations which would become part of the messianic kingdom would be those which “*are called*” by God. To be called by someone’s name is to belong to that person. Thus, to be called by one’s name means to have an intimate association with that person, to belong to them in a special sense.

Those who accept Christ through faith are incorporated into the family of God. They become part of a group which is the special possession of God. Amos is declaring a day would come when the people of God would be re-formed under a Davidic king. Gentiles, here represented by Edom, would be a part of that kingdom. Through the Gospel they become fellow heirs and partakers of the promise. At the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, this text was cited by James, the brother of Jesus, to give Biblical justification for evangelism to the Gentiles, **Acts 15:13-17**, “*After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them **a people for His name.** ¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, ¹⁶ “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that **the remnant of mankind** may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord, who makes these things.”* The usage of this passage in Acts 15 suggests the purpose for the restoration of the kingdom under the Lord Jesus Christ is that **Gentiles** might be included within the family of God. Thus evangelism, sharing the Gospel with others, was part of God’s plan from the very beginning. So, not only will the King be restored, and the realm expanded, but the third way in which God is going to set things right is by having ...

v. 13: THE CURSE REVERSED

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.”

By the way, you plowed up the ground in October. You sowed the seed in December. You reaped the harvest in March, and then (at least for the grape harvest) you treading the grapes to make the wine in June. And here God says, “How would you like to live in a world in which when it comes to plow in October, the reapers aren’t done harvesting all the produce that came out of the field in March? How would you like it if there were so many grapes that they hadn’t finished treading the grapes when it came time to plant more in December?” Well, everybody hearing that says, “Wait a minute. **There’s no place** on the face of the earth that fertile. **There’s no land** that abundant. **There’s no such thing.** There would be no more hunger. There would be such wealth. There would be such abundance. There would be no scarcity. It would be the end of capitalism. It would be the end of socialism. It would be the end of every—ism.”

There’s a physical curse in the Bible, **Genesis 3:17**, “*Because you have ... eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life.*” But now, when the King comes, **the curse is reversed.** God says, “Not only that, but new wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.” Nothing grew up there on the mountains and the top of the hills. It’s too cold, or the soil’s too thin. All that came down was cold water ... but not now. How would you like to live in a world where **you don’t need** plowing and **you don’t need** sowing and **you don’t need** reaping? Sweet wine just flows down out of the mountains like water. What are we talking about here? We’re talking about a **King** who, when He comes, doesn’t just deal with social

problems, but He actually heals the world physically. This is a world in which there is no hunger and no poverty and no injustice. There is no disease, no sickness, no death.

Every other religion but Christianity believes either this material world is an illusion that is going to pass away, or someday we'll leave it, go off to heaven, and that will be it. Christianity, alone of the world religions, has **hope** for the salvation of this world. Only Christianity says God so loved the material world that He became part of it at **Christmas**. He was born in a manger. He came down from Heaven ... and was **made man**. Only Christianity says God so loves this material creation that He came into it. He suffers and dies, and His body is **raised up** in order to heal it. Only this faith says our eternal future has in it ordinary life, eating and drinking and embracing and music and dancing. Ordinary life.

The King will come, the realm will expand, the curse is reversed, and finally, God is going to set things right through ...

v. 14-15: THE RULE ETERNAL

"I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God."

God promised that His people would inherit the glorious kingdom which He's been describing. He declares His intention to "*restore the fortunes of My people Israel.*" The idea is that a people once humiliated and oppressed would experience a wonderful new day. They will build up ruined cities, they would enjoy the fruit of their effort and actually dwell in those cities. Not only would they plant vineyards, they would enjoy the wine. Not only would they plant gardens, they would eat the fruit. Amos was declaring that the frustrations of our lives would not be the experience of the citizens of Christ's Kingdom.

The last of the great promises of Amos stresses the permanence of the inheritance of God's people in the messianic age. Never again would there be an exile. Never again would there be insecurity. Never again would there be judgment. God declares that He will "*plant them upon their land.*" The picture here is of a tree firmly rooted in the ground. Messiah's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. The people of God would "*shall never again be uprooted.*" The land, the kingdom was their inheritance. What's being described here in Old Testament language is equivalent to what Jesus declared in **John 10:28**, "*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*"

Some of you need to **hope again**. In **your plans**, in **your idealism**, in **your vision** of how your life was going to go, **you thought** things would turn out differently than they have. But the steady drumbeat of life in this world, with its sorrow and pain, its physical and emotional suffering, the losses we all must endure have turned your idealism into cynicism. You become cynical and critical and hard because you can't take any more disappointment. And if that's you this morning, hear the Word of God. **There is a reason to hope again**. God has brought this word from the prophet Amos to remind you, **this Christmas season**, that it's okay to **hope again**.

CONCLUSION: Another Abrupt transition

Earlier I said that the **transition** from verse 10 and death, to verse 11 and life, was one of the most **abrupt transitions** in the Bible. It's a **transition** from hatred to love, from lies to truth, from death to life. And that God Himself is going to initiate this **transition**. Actually, the Bible

is full of **abrupt transitions**. One of the great studies you can do is look up all the places where the Bible says, “*But God.*” You’ll have a catalog of **abrupt transitions**. And while this **transition** is not only abrupt, but amazing, for the people of Israel, the coming **transition** is even **more abrupt** and **more amazing**. At the end of the Minor Prophets, Malachi speaks. He’s the last prophet in the Old Testament. And then nothing is heard for 400 years. There are no prophets. God has gone quiet. The words of Amos’ prophecy are fulfilled, **Amos 8:11-12**, “*Behold, the days are coming,*” declares the Lord GOD, “*when I will send a famine on the land — not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.*”¹² *They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.*”

But then, after 400 years of silence ... an angel shows up. And he appears to a young virgin girl named Mary. We find it in **Luke 1:26-33**, “*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,*”²⁷ *to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary.*²⁸ *And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”*²⁹ *But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*³⁰ *And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*³¹ *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.*³² *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David,*³³ *and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.*”

David’s great descendant, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, has broken the back of that sin that alienated men from God – has broken the back of it for all who trust in Him. And that fact turns human life into something completely different than most people imagine it to be. It is the question to put to yourself about absolutely everything in your life: am I thinking, feeling, speaking and living as someone who knows that though I deserve God’s judgment, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, I am soon to be in that world where everlasting joy rests on everyone’s head? If you could see the King there in His glory; if you could see the beauty of the place, if you could see the smile on everyone’s face, if you could feel the gladness and the goodness in every heart, if you could see such fullness of life stretching out before you for ever and ever, you wouldn’t think of anything in your life today in the same way: not the sorrows, not the joys. **And that** is the future of every Christian, **that** is your **Christmas Hope**. And yes, it is **audacious**. Think about that ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I’ll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. God our Father, we bow before You and we confess to You that we often live as a people without hope. And though we claim the name of Jesus, our hearts turn elsewhere when troubles come. We need the audacious hope of Amos 9. Give us a vision of eternal life, motivate us to renew our faith in Christ. Thank You that the King is coming! Thank You that His reign covers all people! Thank You that the curse has been reversed! Thank You that His rule is one of everlasting joy! Grant that we may believe it ... and live like it ... in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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Luke 1:30-33

*“And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David**, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”*