

Theme: Theme: Revival

Series: A Theology for Living?

### PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD

Where would you go to hide from God? Some people will hide from God in bars and night clubs and in drunken bouts on the river on weekends. If they drink enough, if they are drunk enough, they will not notice that God is around. But they grow miserable because the more they drink the more guilty they become. God is not so easy to hide from.

Others will hide from God through anger. They are mad at the world, they are mad at themselves. They flash anger every chance they get. They are full of sarcasm and put downs. They hate everything that is good and beautiful and graceful. Someone has hurt them deeply and they promise to themselves that they will never be hurt again. Anger is their shield and it hides them from God. But God keeps seeing them and they keep getting angry.

Another way to hide from God is to deny that he exists. This is growing in popularity. Richard Dawkins, a famous biologist has made it cool to be an atheist. He and a few others have written some scathing books against God in general and against Christianity in particular. I have read some of it and I don't think we have anything to worry about. They are full of anger, almost irrationally so. I have talked to a few atheists and asked them why they hate God so much and they said they don't hate God, they don't believe he exists. Then I ask them, if he does not exist, why do you spend so much time and energy arguing about the God you claim does not exist? If you don't believe in him, why spend all this energy? They never have an answer.

There are so many ways to try to hide from God. Drugs is an obvious one, but so can sex and pleasure. Sport that occupies all your time is a way to hide from God. Anything that gives you cover and drowns out the voice of your conscience can become a means of hiding from God.

The most clever way, maybe the coolest way is through church and religion. Some people will go to church and participate in the life of the church. They worship and fellowship and may even tithe. They talk the talk. They pray and make comments about the life of the spirit. But, in their hearts they are very far away. They are hypocrites and they know it. It comes out sometimes in times of difficulty or when they have to take a stand on something or have to sacrifice some of their time on behalf of the church. Sometimes you will see that they are hiding. You maybe shocked at their response or their behavior or their threats. Or

you are shocked at the news that they did something that seems so out of character. In reality, material things. Money, clothes, cars, homes, position, politics, power, influence, are far more important than serving God.

This is precisely the kind of person that God addresses in Amos chapter four. It is a horrible and ugly promise that God makes to them. God calls these women, fat cows of Bashan who are on the mountains of Samaria. Bashan was a region that was famous for its cattle. The grazing was rich and the cattle were healthy and fat. On behalf of God, why did Amos level such an insult to them? They wanted what they wanted and they did not care how it was gotten. These women oppressed the poor and crushed the needy. How? By insisting that their husbands bring them wealth so they could live a life of luxury. They demanded their husbands keep the liquor cabinet well stocked so they could drink all day. And their husbands were happy to comply.

God's judgment is brutal. He swears by his own holiness that they will be carried away. When he swore by his holiness, it was a guarantee that his judgment will not fail. However, it is gruesome. They will be carried away on meat hooks, just like cattle. The last of them will be carried away on fish hooks. Each of them will be carried out through the breeched wall of the city and dragged away to a foreign land.

God's judgment continues. Go up to Bethel and transgress and to Gilgal and multiply your transgressions. These are the worship centers in the northern kingdom. These evil woman who oppress the poor and crush the needy, go and sacrifice every morning and bring their tithes every three days. They come with their thank offerings thanking God for their material blessings, how ironic. They bring their free will offerings. They and their husbands love to do this because a sinner's best hideout is at church where they look good to their neighbors and they think that God approves of them. In reality, they think they are hiding from God. And God passes vicious judgment on them.

But this should not come as a surprise to them. God had warned them. He had sent famine to them, this is what cleanness of teeth means. Another city he withheld rain. He brought about natural disasters so that they might turn back and they did not turn. He sent upon them disease and agriculture disasters. He brought wars against them and yet they would not fear.

We know about these kinds of things. In 1990, we went to war for the first time in Iraq

and people across the country went to church to pray and seek comfort. It did not last long. The came September 11, 2001 and people flocked to church and sought God's fact. But it did not last. Two years ago we had a terrible hurricane, of which we still feel the effects. And people got right with God for a time. But even that has gone. What does it take to get our attention? What does it take for us to hear the voice of God?

Israel had been hiding behind it religious practices. They went to church to be seen. So, how ironic it is when God says to his people, prepare to meet your God. They hid from God in the very rituals that God gave them. God called them and disciplined them and they would not listen. Now, they will meet Him. This is not good. It is not a meeting of equals or a meeting to get a few things straightened out. It is a meeting of judgment. The One who makes the dawn into darkness and treads the high places, Lord God of hosts, makes himself known.

We waste so much time and energy resisting God. We play the game. We act certain ways so that people will think the best of us. But in certain moments we see reality, no turning the other cheek, no loving a brother or a sister whom you look down upon and call names. We steal from God and call it work or play or needed time off or helping someone else or any number of other things. But God should be happy because we grace his church and we contribute our offerings and we look the part.

What God wants are genuine people of faith who put him first. Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given unto you.

Lets not presume upon God. Lets not try to hide from him in plain sight. Every one of us is preparing to meet God. The question is under what conditions? Will it be, "well done good and faithful servants." Or will it be words of judgment, will it be "I never knew you?"

Don't fool yourself, if you can resist God's will, if you can continually play the game of religion on the outside but emptiness on the inside, do you really think you have what it takes to please God when you meet him face to face? Are you one of those types that believes because you mouths the words and joined the church that God has to take you in no matter what you do and how much you ignore him? You are not prepared to meet God.