

**Sunday, November 12, 2017 – 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**“The Roar”**

Amos 5: 18-24

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV  
Central Image Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

I know someone who took his nephew to the zoo – a brave rambunctious preschooler. The lion enclosure had a floor to ceiling window of thick glass. The king of the pride was laying majestically just a couple of feet away. The little boy, knowing the lion couldn't possibly get through that thick glass window began dancing in front of the king, just on the cusp of teasing him. After a few seconds, the king was displeased and he roared and took a swipe at the little boy. The preschooler slowly backed away from the window, eyes wide and jaw dropped in terror, awed by the teeth, the claws and the blood curdling ROAR of the king. Needless to say, he was a different little boy for the rest of their day at the zoo.

Ever get a little too comfortable when you got used to something? The harsh words that the Old Testament prophet Amos speaks in our Old Testament lesson is a word of warning. Israel had gone far beyond just being comfortable or going through the motions – they were disrespectful and dancing up along the edge... only there's no protective glass in place. They've started mixing their worship with the worship of other gods, gods from the surrounding nations. They're flaunting their disobedience – accruing vast wealth and stately mansions on the backs of the poor, corruption that forces innocent people to pay bribes, threatening people of good conscience to stay silent in the face of evil for fear of reprisal. And all the while God sees through the charade of their religious worship and feasts, their offerings and the joyful songs. God judges it empty, meaningless, contemptible. The people of Israel have gotten overly comfortable, sloppy, reckless, even carefree about who their God is. And the king was displeased.

Now let me be clear, there's not a 1 to 1 connection to Amos' words to Israel and the people of Mountain View today. We come here speaking the truth about our sin, speaking the truth about what God ought to do to us for this disobedience, we ask for God to show us mercy and then He forgives us our sin. I don't think God is about take a swipe at you. And yet there's

also an element of comparison, and let's stop and check ourselves for a minute, on this idea – are we a little too comfortable with God?

The pendulum has definitely shifted – in previous generations a healthy fear of God swung too far into the realm of unhealthy fear. It's good that we think of God as a loving Father who “tenderly invites us,” like the dad of a toddler inviting his child onto his knee. The Bible describes Jesus as not only our Savior but also our brother and a friend. Christian worship is different than every other religion's worship because God is described in very intimate familial ways – we're family to God. That can make it so that we lose that healthy respect and awe when we're so comfortable and God is so familiar, He can almost start to seem... ordinary.

So we may find ourselves so comfortable that we imagine it's not important to have God help us as He speaks to us through His Word – in worship, in Bible study or small groups. Or maybe we fall for the idea that other things are more important than our relationship with God – and God will understand, not unlike a long-suffering friend when you send a text to say you'll have to reschedule for another time. We're tempted to want God the way we like other things in our life – safe, automated, tame, docile, domesticated.

No, God tells Israel! This is the King! The King that all other kings, and everyone strong and important and powerful you've ever known or respected or feared will bow their knee to – and if a person tries to run from the displeasure of the King they might as well run into a bear on the other side. Our God is not tame or safe or comfortable!

For Israel, the result of their dancing along the edge is a day of darkness. We know that the events of 40 years after this text, in 722BC, where the nation of Assyria destroys Israel are the result of this “teasing” of the King. About a century and a half later, a similar fate will hit the other kingdom, Judah. It will be a day of darkness for those who stand against the King.

No, our God, while familiar is not ordinary and not tame and He will take out His royal wrath. Another day of darkness came. The sky turned black at noon as all the fury of the King came down on someone who did nothing wrong but paid the consequences for everyone who dances and teases too close to the edge. Like one caught between a lion and a bear, Jesus got bounced between Pontius Pilate and Herod and back to Pilate again. And a swipe of wrath came from a cat of nine tails, 40 lashes minus 1 and then He was nailed to a tree. And once

when He died, the earth roared and shook the temple in Jerusalem, and then on the morning when He rose the earth roared once more and rocked a giant stone from the front of His tomb.

Another great Day of the Lord is coming, by no means ordinary but awesome and awe inspiring and majestic – a day fit only for the King of Kings. It won't be a day of darkness for those who know the Lord but a day of glory. Jesus will come down from Heaven with a loud command and with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and His wrath will swipe a fatal blow to death itself, releasing its icy grip off of those in their graves and changing everyone who is still alive to live in new bodies with the Lord forever, in just the proper balance of loving family intimacy and majestic awe due for our King. In Jesus' name, Amen.