

An Exegetical and Homiletical Study of Amos 8:11-14

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The assignment before us is an exegetical and homiletical study of Amos 8:11-14. At first glance at this text (or at any portion of Amos, for that matter) the preacher might well ask, "In what way at all does Amos relate to God's people today, 28 centuries later?" That is the question the people in the pew will ask upon hearing the text. That is the question the preacher will want to give an answer to and lead his people to see. Our whole presupposition and approach to this text is that it does have something to say directly to God's people today because it is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God. That means that in Amos we have not only what God has spoken, but God speaking, his message of law and gospel, to people of all times and all places, calling them to repentance and faith in Christ. In the relatively short book of Amos, no less than 45 times are there explicit claims to divine, verbal inspiration through such formulas as "this is what the LORD says." and "declares the LORD" and variations on the same. Amos, too, is the Scripture of God which bears witness to Christ (Lk 24:27). It is wholesome, for the preacher to consciously and deliberately meditate on this sacred fact every time he reverently and prayerfully approaches a portion of Scripture so that he may speak as one speaking the very oracles of God (1 Pe 4:11).

To properly interpret and apply this portion of Scripture, the preacher will want to carefully note the narrower and wider context. Therefore, at this time, we will make

A Brief Isogical Study of Amos

Amos speaks of his prophetic activity taking place in the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel and Uzziah in Judah (1:1; 7:10). The time is approximately 790-750 BC. This was a time when both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were enjoying a brief period of peace, prosperity and international prestige. Recall the geography of the ancient Middle East. The whole region, referred to as "the Fertile Crescent," was straddled by the two great river-based cultures, the one on the Nile and the other on the Tigris-Euphrates. Geographically, politically and economically, the whole region was one giant teeter-totter, with Egypt on one end and Mesopotamia on the other. And the narrow, little piece of real estate called Israel, right in the middle, was the fulcrum. In general, the history of the ancient Fertile Crescent was when one end of the teeter-totter was up, the other end was down, and vice versa. But at the time of Amos both ends of the teeter-totter were down and Israel was up. The great world powers were experiencing a period of weakness and decline. The glory of Egypt lay in the past. Assyria to the northeast was destined to be the instrument of God's wrath against Israel in the future, after 745 BC and the rise of Tiglath-Pileser III. But between 800 and 750 BC, no Assyrian army marched out against Israel. Internal problems and lack of capable leadership crippled Assyria for a half century.

Syria, or Aram, with its capital at Damascus, had been a constant source of grief for Israel in the 9th Century BC, but they too were in a state of weakness, having been decisively defeated by Assyria just before 800 BC. A power vacuum existed in the ancient world and it did not take long for the vacuum to be filled.

In the person of Jeroboam II, Israel acquired a king of great ability and energy. He quickly recognized the international situation and exploited it to his advantage, as also did his contemporary sitting on the throne in Jerusalem. Jeroboam II took Damascus and subjugated territory far to the north of Israel (2 Kgs 14: 25). He was now in a position to control international commerce. Israel reaped the financial benefits. The capital city, Samaria, became a showcase of royal splendor. Houses and their furnishings were decorated with exquisitely wrought ivory carvings (cf. Amos 3:15; 6:4-6; 5:11). In short, happy days were here again for Israel. Or so it seemed. To use Martin Franzmann's well-turned phrases:

Politically successful, materially prosperous, culturally advanced, and religiously active, Israel did look like a basket of lush and lovely summer fruit (Am 8:1). But the fruit was full of worms and rotteness. In their power and prosperity the Israelites violated both of the twin commandments of love. They did not love the Lord their God with all their hearts; their worship was deadened by formalism and shot through with vicious elements adopted from their pagan neighbors. They did not love their neighbors as themselves; the new class of the influential and powerful rich exploited and oppressed the poor and created bitter divisions within the family of the people of God. Since the members of the prophetic guild were silent, God raised up a farmer from Tekoa in the south to speak His annihilating no to all that. That farmer was Amos (Am 7:14-15). (Roehrs-Franzmann: *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, p.605)

What was the Lord's message through Amos to his spiritually apostate people? It is summed up at the beginning of the book: "The LORD roars from Zion" (1:2) and the same metaphor is employed again in 3:8: "The lion has roared—who will not fear? The sovereign LORD has spoken, who can but prophesy?" This metaphor is so striking and it has such a bearing on the whole spirit and message of the book, including our specific text; so please permit me to digress on it for a paragraph.

Amos pictures the Lord as a lion roaring. Even when we see and hear the lion at the zoo, even with stout bars, strong plate glass and high walls—his roar still has a spine-chilling effect. But now remove the bars, restore the lion to its habitat, replace its dead meat for food with living prey, revitalize the caged ferocity until it matches again its unfettered and native intensity. The roar in question (*sha'ag*) is the pouncing roar, the roar of the lion already committed to the attack and the kill, the roar intended to paralyze its victim with terror. It is the roar from which there is no escape. And who is doing the roaring? So emphatically does Amos want us to know, that he breaks all the grammar rules of normal Hebrew sentence structure: יהוה מציון ישאג. It is the LORD, the God of the Covenant, the God of the gospel, the God who reveals himself as the Holy One who punishes all sins and forgives all sins in Christ (Ex 34:6,7; Is 53). It is the LORD, who outside of his covenant grace in Christ, is a lion who tears sinners to shreds and consumes them in judgment.

That is Amos' message. The book is almost entirely the message of law and judgment. (Note Luther's analysis of the book: "No prophet, I think, has so little in the way of promises and so much in the way of denunciations and threats"—LW 35:320.) It is God's message which says to the sinner there is no escape for you, no hope, you will be damned for your sins. It is the message every sinner needs to hear for the Spirit to perform his "strange work" (FC SD V, 11) of convicting him of sin and working contrition in his heart, that is, "terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin" (AC XII).

The message of God's judgment on sin and unbelief is portrayed in Amos 7-9 in a series of five visions. Chapter 8 contains the fourth vision of judgment. Israel is pictured as "a basket of ripe fruit" (8:1). Then the Lord announces, "The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer" (8:2). What does the Lord have in mind? For the answer we now turn to

An Exegetical Study of Amos 8:11-14

הַיְהוָה יִמְרָם בְּאֵימֹת נְאֻם יְהוָה יְהוָה¹¹
וְהַשְׁלַחְתִּי רָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ
לֹא-רָעָב לְלֶחֶם וְלֹא-צָמָא לְמַיִם
כִּי אִם-לְשֹׁמֵעַ אֶת דְּבַר יְהוָה
וְנָעוּ מֵיָם עַד-יָם וּמִצְפֹּן וְעַד-מִזְרָח יְשׁוּטְטוּ¹²
לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת-דְּבַר יְהוָה וְלֹא יִמָּצְאוּ
כִּי הֵם הֵיוּ תֹתֵעַלְפָנָה הַבְּתוּלָה הַיְפֹטוּת וְהַבְּחוּרִים בְּצִמָּא:¹³

הַנְּשַׁבְּעִים בְּאֲשַׁמֶּת שְׁמֹרֹן¹⁴
וְאָמְרוּ חַי אֱלֹהֵי דָן וְחַי דְּגֵרָךְ בְּאֶרֶץ-שֶׁבַע
וְנָפְלוּ וְלֹא-יָקוּמוּ עוֹד:

- ¹¹ “Behold! The days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD,
“when I will send a famine through the land,
not a famine of bread or a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the LORD.
¹² “People will stagger from sea to sea, from north even to the east they will wander,
seeking the word of the LORD. But they will not find it.
¹³ “In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint from thirst.
¹⁴ “Those who swear by the guilt of Samaria,
who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan,’ and, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives,
they will fall and never rise again.”

Verse 11

הִנֵּה is a demonstrative particle, used over 1000 times in the Old Testament to introduce some solemn, important declaration or prediction. It serves as an attention getter: “Hey, listen up! I have something important to say to you!” It is commonly used with a participle, as is the case here, יָמִים בָּאִים. We may translate: “The days are coming,” even though יָמִים does not have the article. *The* days are made definite by the modifying clause, “when I will send a famine.”

אָמַר is a masculine noun from the root *na'am*. It means “utterance,” “declaration” or even “revelation,” because it is used exclusively of God speaking his revealed Word. It is usually translated in English as a verb, “says” or “declares.” It is הַנֵּה אֲדַבֵּר who is speaking, the God who is the sovereign Master and Lord in control of men, nature, and all history. He is the God who makes history and specifically, as הַנֵּה, the ever faithful, unchanging God of grace, he promises and makes salvation history.

“I will send a famine in the land,” he says. וְהִשַּׁלַּחְתִּי is the hiphil perfect of *shalach*. It occurs in the hiphil only five times in the entire Old Testament. הַנֵּה is always the subject, while the object is always a plague or disaster. The perfect state of verb, which is used here, represents completed action (either in fact or in the mind of the speaker). Here it is the revelation of a future action, described as though it was already completed, because God had resolved that it shall take place. We call it a “prophetic perfect.” The waw is conjunctive and describes the action of the verb to be concurrent with the action expressed in the previous clause, “the days are coming.” Therefore we translate it “when.”

רָעָב is famine or hunger. Famine, especially in ancient times when food storage and distribution were very limited, meant severe hardship and starvation for many. In the past, the Lord had sent famine and drought as a judgment on Israel’s impenitence for the purpose of calling them back to him (4:6-8). But this famine would be different: “not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.” כִּי אֵם is used to introduce a thought which is adversative to the last one, “not that, but rather this.” After rejecting his saving Word for so long, the Lord was now going to withdraw his Word from Israel. This is God’s final judgment on and rejection of hardened unbelievers. A veritable feast of the Word and its blessings was there for Israel to enjoy. But they would have none of it (cf. 2:12; 7:10-16). Finally, the Lord said, “Then I will let you have it your way.” Verse 11 announces the coming of the famine and what its nature will be, a famine of the Word. Verses 12 and 13 describe the extent and intensity of the famine.

Verse 12

וְנָעוּ מִיָּם עַד-יָם “People will stagger from sea to sea.” There is no specific subject mentioned. It is obviously referring to the people suffering from the famine; so we supply the thought in the translation with the impersonal “people.” The primary idea of *nu’a* is of a repetitive to and fro movement. The word is used of the reeling of drunkards, of the swaying of trees in the wind, of the quivering of lips, and then of the unsteady seeking of persons bewildered, looking for what they know not where to find. There may even be a note of franticness implied. The picture would be similar to losing one’s wallet or purse, full of important documents, identification and bills, searching frantically for it, with the sick feeling of knowing that the search is in vain. The perfect state of the verb is used, again, as a prophetic perfect.

The phrase “from sea to sea and from north to east” (מִיָּם עַד-יָם וּמִצְפוֹן וְעַד-מְזָרְחָה) serves to underscore the extent of the famine. Does the phrase have specific geographic points in mind, such as “from the Dead Sea in the southeast of Israel to the Mediterranean Sea on the west, then to the north and finally back to the southeast again? The phrase מִיָּם עַד-יָם is used in other instances (Ps 72:8; Zch 9:10) where the context makes it clear that it is a more general reference to “all over,” from one end of the world to the other,” in other words, wherever people look. The phrase “from north to east” would then be taken as an abbreviated form for “from the north to the south, and from the east to the west.”

The search here described is not a real search for the Word, in the sense of a search prompted by a desire for what the Word really contains, namely the law and the gospel which work sincere repentance, saving faith and true obedience. Such a search the Lord himself initiates through his Word. The search spoken of here is merely a search for an escape from God’s judgment, a search that is futile.

Verse 13

Verse 13 further underscores the intensity of the famine. *’alaph* in the hithpael means to faint or swoon away. *Bethulah* is the common word for virgin and *bachur* is the young man in the prime of manhood and virility. If the strongest perish from this thirst, how much more the weak!

Verse 14

Verse 14 describes the final results of the famine: “They will fall and never rise again.” The victims of the famine are described in this verse as being “religious” people. When the Word of truth is rejected, the spiritual vacuum is quickly filled by cults and sects of all kinds. In Amos’ day cults sprang up throughout the land. Here he specifically mentions the cities of Samaria, Dan and Beersheba as cultic centers. People were apparently flocking to these “religious” centers to satisfy some religious craving, but they were not finding the Word of the Lord.

To swear by a deity means not only to acknowledge its reality, but also to confess one’s loyalty to it. The “guilt of Samaria” is a literal translation of אֲשָׁמַת שְׁמֶרֶן *ashmah* (from *asham*) is used to mean “wrong-doing,” “guiltiness,” “guilt” or the “cause of guilt” (Lev 4:3; 6:7, etc.) It is also used then to mean a “guilt-offering” (Lev 6:5). Here it is, no doubt, a reference to the calf worship promoted as the state religion of the Northern Kingdom. Some modern versions (RSV, NEB, NIV footnote) translate it as “Ashimah,” not as a transliteration of *ashmah*, but as a corruption of *ashimah*, the name of a Syrian goddess mentioned in 2 Kings 17: 30. It has been suggested that Ashimah may be another name for Ashera, the Canaanite mother goddess (Roehrs-Franzmann, p.614). Whatever the specific reference, it is a condemnation of worship and religion that is wrong, religion that is not in accord with the revealed Word of the Lord.

“The “god of Dan” no doubt refers to the golden calf set up in Dan by Jeroboam 1 (1 Kgs 12:28-29). We don’t know what the “way of Beersheba” specifically refers to, whether another form of perverted Jehovah worship such as at Dan and Bethel, or a cultus that was totally heathen. Either way, again, in the context it was a religion that was wrong because it was not according to the truth of the revealed Word of the Lord.

וְנִפְּלוּ is another prophetic perfect. The judgment is announced. There is no escape. Their doom is sealed. This is the final judgment. Once the Word is withdrawn there is no hope, no chance for repentance. For every life-giving, spiritual blessing God gives: knowledge of Christ our Savior, his forgiveness, pardon, peace, the Holy Spirit, repentance, faith, the adoption of sons, confidence to pray, the blessed hope of eternal life—every spiritual blessing comes only through the Word. Take away the Word and all that is left is spiritual starvation and death. As Luther Comments on Genesis 6:3:

...the anger of God is most terrible when he withdraws his Word. Who would not prefer physical afflictions like pestilence, famine, or the sword to a famine of the Word, which is always coupled with eternal damnation. (LW 2:17)

The Lord said the famine of his Word would come on impenitent Israel and it did. It has come many times since then. We think of the history of the ancient church and such early metropolitan centers of Christendom as Ephesus, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome. The first three have been in the darkness of Islam now for centuries and Rome has the pope. Luther's analysis of the gospel in history is true and his admonition is timely:

Buy while the market is at your door; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; make use of God's grace and word while it is there! For you should know that God's Word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. (LW 45:352)

Luther saw already in his day that the famine of the Word would come upon Germany. In a sermon he preached in the City Church in Wittenberg in 1532 he spoke of the Reformation gospel:

When the Word was first proclaimed twelve or fifteen years ago, the people hearkened to it eagerly. Everybody rejoiced that it was no longer necessary to plague oneself with good works. People remarked: "Thank God, we now have water to drink!" At that time they were thirsty, and the Gospel doctrine tasted good to them. We drank of it; that was a precious teaching. But now we are sated and tired of the drink. Therefore God will have to forsake us and let us die of thirst, for He remains only with those who feel their wretched condition. But few are aware of this. The majority pervert the Gospel into carnal license. (LW 23:269)

Luther's fear of the famine coming upon his beloved Germany has been realized many times over, first through the ravages of the Catholic Counter Reformation, and the Thirty Years War. Later on it was in the form of the excesses of Pietism, then Rationalism, culminating in modern times in National Socialism and atheistic communism. The same history has been repeated in many other lands.

And what about our land? Surely, we must realized that the famine of the Word occurs today, not only when communists take over a country, make atheism the law of the land, board up the churches, burn the Bibles and liquidate the clergy. Whenever the truth of the Word is gradually and subtly supplanted by counterfeit doctrine, a famine of the Word creeps in unnoticed by the spiritually complacent and content. This is how it began in the Northern Kingdom where king and priest conspired to concoct a sham religion that would keep the populace happy and content.

Luther, again, demonstrates keen insight when he says:

For when the Word has been taken away, what else remains but the most terrible darkness of human reason which wants to be our mistress and which can teach nothing else than the doctrines of the demons (LW 18:183).

Think of how this has happened to entire church bodies which have forsaken the Word for the demythology of the negative historical-critical method of Bible interpretation. And we see and hear the tragic results of that as we make hospital calls and shut-in calls in nursing homes and overhear liberal clergy-persons “ministering” to their hurting and suffering people, not sharing the Good News of the Word with them, but instead reading poems about birds and butterflies and the serenities of nature. What is all that, but a famine of the Word! Or when we listen to a church service on the radio and the sermon sounds like the preacher is reading editorials from the *Milwaukee Journal*—whenever the gospel is replaced by a social or political “gospel,” what is that but a famine of the Word!

The famine strikes not only entire nations and whole church bodies. It strikes the individual who takes the Word too much for granted for too long. How many of us don’t have stories we could tell about members of our congregations or other acquaintances who have insisted on starving themselves of the Word, despite all repeated evangelical admonition. Perhaps even some calamity struck them and chopped them off at the knees. Once more we prayed and hoped: now they will be receptive. We shared the law and the gospel with them as fervently and personally as the Spirit gives us ability to. But our words might as well have been in a foreign tongue. Their only response was one of “That isn’t the answer.” So they search for “comfort” in cults and sectarian groups, in a psychiatrist’s office or who knows where all? That, too, I would say is an individual application and example of this most fearsome judgment of the Lord, when he says, “Have it your way! I will let you have what you want!” Enough has been said about general applications of this text. We still need to comment on

The Homiletical Application of This Text

There are some special challenges which this text poses for the preacher of the gospel. The most obvious challenge is that the text is all law and it was addressed originally to that part of the Old Testament theocracy which had apostasized and rejected its covenant Lord in hardened unbelief. The people we will share this Word of God with are not hardened unbelievers. They are the lambs and sheep who listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, who know him and follow him. According to their new man, born of the gospel, they deeply grieve over the sins of the flesh against the Third Commandment. With all their hearts they cherish his Word and want to live according to it.

Yet, because every Christian in this life still has the sinful flesh, he also continually needs to hear the law. When the Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with publicans and sinners he told them, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:13). Just as people who think they are healthy will see no need for doctors and medicine, so men who do not see their sinfulness and do not believe they will suffer the awful consequences for their sins in eternity will see no need for the Savior and his forgiveness. The Lord has to first show us and convince us of just how sick we are, how desperate our situation is, before he comes to rescue us and apply the healing balm of his grace. This text from Amos applies to God’s people of all time as a warning of the dire consequences of spiritual complacency and apostasy which our sinful flesh is always prone to.

As far as preaching values of this text, it offers the preacher a fine opportunity to preach on the sins against the Third Commandment. We will want to preach the law as Amos did. Amos did not just pick and jab a little bit at superficial scabs. He took the scalpel and sliced and amputated until he exposed the root problem of sinful Israel, a false heart, a heart that served idols. So also in our preaching. We can do much more to help our people in dealing with their sins against the Third Commandment than make a few sarcastic jabs and scolding remarks about poor attendance in Bible Class and worship services, lack of personal Bible reading, etc. Those are only the outward symptoms. Like Israel, the root sin lies in the heart. It is a false heart, an unfaithful heart, a heart full of idols. We aren’t guilty of worshiping golden calves. But who can claim he has not bowed down to the modern false gods of profit, possessions, prestige, power, pride and sinful pleasures? It is the sin of the false heart that needs to be exposed and condemned, repented of and its idols renounced.

In preaching on a text such as this one from Amos which is all law, we need to keep in mind that the Lord's whole purpose for speaking at all to sinful man is to reveal his grace in Christ to save us. While the text explicitly points out the dire effects of the famine of the Word, implicit in it and in the whole context of Scripture is the fact of all the life-giving, spiritual blessings the Lord gives and offers us freely for Christ's sake through the Word. In considering the preaching values of this text, then, there will not only be such "negative" things as God's law, judgment, anger and punishment, but also the "positive" things as the life-giving, healing blessings of the Word. Having probed deep with the law, we can then also apply the healing balm of the gospel to its fullest extent. The text offers a good opportunity to preach on the Scripture truths that. "man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord (Mt 4:4) and to encourage the listener to "work not for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (Jn 6:27). In these thoughts we have the goal of the sermon, to touch the hearts of our people with the horrible plight and condition they would be in as sinners without the Word and to deepen their appreciation of all the treasures which God gives them in the Word, so that they will want the more gladly to hear, learn, cherish and share it.

A simple analysis of the text would be something like this:

- Amos announces the famine of God's Word
- vs. 11 - the nature of the famine - spiritual
- vs. 12,13 - the extent and intensity of the famine
- vs. 14 - the result of the famine - permanent

While an analytic type of basic outline could be formulated on the basis of the text analysis, the preacher might rather want to go with a synthetic form of outline in order to insure that the "positive" values of the text are sufficiently expounded on in the sermon. The text color of this portion of Scripture is so striking that it would seem odd not to incorporate it to a greater or lesser degree in the outline. The nouns "famine," "food" and "thirst" stand out, as well as the verbs "search" and "(not) find." We will want to avoid a "theme" that is merely a title, such as "The Famine of God's Word". There is no obvious goal for the listener in such a title. Put a verb in it. Since the text serves to warn God's people, perhaps the verb "beware" would be suitable.

- Beware the Famine of God's Word
- I. It will come.
- II. It can be avoided.

Or using the same theme, the parts could be recast into the form of a two-fold prayer which the warning moves us to pray:

- Beware the Famine of God's Word
- I. You told us, Lord, it will come.
- II. Help us, Lord, to avoid it.

Another possibility would be to cast the theme in the form of a petition:

- Graciously Defend Us, Lord, from Famine (by teaching us to...)
- I. Seek not the food that spoils.
- II. Seek the food that endures (to eternal life).

The parts take their color from Jesus' admonition in John 6:27; but notice that the verb "seek", using the text color of Amos, is substituted for the verb "work", used in John 6. This outline teaches that it is by God's grace

alone that we possess His Word, which removes all thoughts of human pride and self-righteousness. The parts allow the preacher to treat the malady of materialism that infects all of our people and us. We do not need to demonstrate the necessity of “bread and water” as an absolute need for physical life; everybody knows that. But what everyone does not know and which we all need to be reminded of is that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word...” (Mt. 4:4).

Still another approach and basic outline for this text is one I found in Lenski (slightly revising the wording and tightening it up):

“I Will Send A Famine In The Land!”

- I. Mark what led up to it.
- II. See God’s justice in it.
- III. Heed God’s warning in it.

I preached on this text for Reformation Sunday this past October, using the second outline, offered in a more expanded form here to show the development of the parts.

Introduction: What would you think if, when I introduced my sermon text to you this morning, instead of giving the usual introduction and reading from the Bible, I would have said something like, “Today’s sermon will not be based on the Word of God. We are not allowed to read from the Bible anymore. So today’s sermon will be based on one of Aesop’s fables”? I’m sure you are thinking, “That is preposterous! Such a thing has never happened and it could not happen to us either.” But you would be wrong. Such a thing has happened. People have experienced a famine of God’s Word. It happened to Israel in Amos’ time. It happened in the Reformation Land of Luther’s Germany. It could happen to us in our land, too. It can happen to any individual who takes God’s Word too much for granted for too long. For all of us who have been blessed with the Word of God, the warning of Amos applies:

Beware The Famine Of God’s Word (This warning moves us to pray:)

- I. You told us, Lord, it will come.
 - A. It came to Israel.
 1. From the LORD (vs. 11)
 2. Because of Israel’s apostasy (calf worship, cults, etc.) (vs. 14)
 3. The Lord sent his prophets, calling his people to repent, offering them a feast of the Word; they refused, so the famine came (vs. 12)
 - B. It came to Luther’s Germany
 1. Through the work of Luther and the Reformation, the Lord offered Germany a feast of his Word. Expound on the Reformation sola’s.
 2. Luther foresaw and warned that the famine would come for the Germans’ despising the Word.
 3. The famine in Germany today.
 - C. It is coming on our land.
 1. Presently we are enjoying a feast of the Word (the pure gospel in our midst; the Bible a best-seller, etc.)
 2. Yet the woeful ignorance of the Bible and Christian doctrine among Americans in general.
 3. Are you starving yourself of the Word? (outward symptoms)
 4. Are you continually saying no to the Word by your life-style? If so, then God threatens finally to judge and send a famine.

Transition: The Lord has warned us that the famine will come. It has come, many times, to entire nations, to whole church bodies, to individuals. What about us who, as Christians, love the Word and want to cherish and live it with all our hearts? It is God's warning which applies to us, too. It is the warning that moves us to pray:

II. Help us, Lord, to avoid the famine.

A. By leading us to repent

1. Not only of the outward sins (staying away from the means of grace, spiritual laziness, etc.)
2. But the root sin of a false heart full of modern idols
3. Leading us to Christ in Word and sacrament where you have the full forgiveness of all your sins.

B. By bringing us to see

1. That we do not live by bread alone
2. But by every Word, etc.

C. By giving us faithful hearts

1. Grateful to the Lord for restoring the pure gospel through the Reformation and graciously keeping it pure in our midst
2. Zealous to live in the Word ourselves and to share it with others in our home, church and schools.

Conclusion: Such prayers, coming from a repentant and sincere heart will not go unanswered. They will be answered by your God of grace who says to you through Isaiah: "Quote Isaiah 55:1-3a."

I found preaching on this text to be personally very rewarding. I am sure you will, too. The Lord bless you in your efforts.