The Famine of The Word of God
Amos 8:11-13 (NKJV)

Our scripture text this evening comes from an Old Testament Book we rarely read or study and that is the Book of Amos.

Please turn with me to Amos the eighth chapter and let’s read verses 11-13.

Amos 8:11-13 (NKJV)

11 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “That 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, seeking the word of the Lord, But shall not find it.

13 “In that day the fair virgins And strong young men Shall faint from thirst.

P R A Y E R
******************************************************************************************

I N T R O D U C T I O N

We have all seen those advertisements on TV by various hunger relief organizations such as Save The Children and World Vision International.

The ads show us the gaunt faces and hollow eyes of children in impoverished countries who are either starving to death or grossly malnourished. If you are like me, those images just break my heart.
It took from Adam and Eve until 1800 for the world population to reach **1 BILLION**.

It took just 140 years, from 1800 to 1940 for the world population to reach **2 BILLION**.

It took just 30 years, from 1940 to 1970, for the world population to climb to **3 BILLION**.

And in the last 42 years, from 1970 until 2012, the world population has more than doubled from **3 BILLION to a little over 7 BILLION**.

If the current population growth rate trends continue as they have since 1970, the projected world population by the end of this century will be around **16 BILLION people**.

As the world population has sharply risen the world’s food supply has sharply decreased. **Simply put, we have more mouths to feed than food to feed them.**

Warnings have already been issued that within twenty years the greatest percentage of the world will be starving or grossly malnourished unless we start producing **50% more food** than we are producing right now.

Christ warned us in Matthew 24 that one of things to watch for to indicate His coming is getting near is when we see **an increase in famine**.

**************************************************************************

**In our scripture text this evening, the prophet Amos is warning of a **different kind of famine**. Not a famine of **food**, but a famine of the word of God.**
First of all, I would have you to consider........

I. The Nature of The Famine of The Word of God Then

11 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “That 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.

1. You notice in the very last sentence of this eleventh verse Amos is not saying “there will be a lack of God’s word” what he is saying is “there will be a famine of HEARING the WORDS of the LORD.”

2. The Hebrew word Amos uses in this verse for “hearing” is the word ‘shama.” Shama means to “listen intelligently.” It means “To listen not only with one’s EARS but also with one’s MIND and HEART.

   ANALOGY: Have you ever been talking to someone and you could tell by the “blank expression” on their face they hearing what you were saying with their ears, but their mind wasn’t registering what you were saying.

   Its kind of like when you wives tell us husbands to “take out the trash” and we say, OK. But then an hour later the trash is still there.

   You see, “we heard what you said with our ears” but the fact the trash is still sitting there tells you we didn’t “listen intelligently.” We didn’t process what you said. We didn’t take any action. We didn’t heed what you asked us to do.

3. In Amos’ day, the Jewish people were hearing the words of the prophets, but they weren’t taking any action. They weren’t heeding what the prophets said.
4. Amos......Isaiah......Jeremiah......and others warned the people to repent of their wicked ways and turn back to GOD.

   You see, it wasn’t as if there was no word from the LORD. It wasn’t as if the people didn’t hear what the prophets said or that they didn’t understand what the prophets said. They chose NOT to listen! They chose NOT to obey! They chose NOT to repent!

   There was a “famine of HEARING the words of the LORD.”

5. In VERSE 12 Amos warned Israel of the serious consequences of refusing to listen to and obey God’s words.

   12 They shall wander from sea to sea,
   And from north to east;
   They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, But shall not find it.

   Amos is warning Israel that if you “push God’s word away” long enough there will come some dire time in your future when you will look for it........long for it........hunger for it, but will not find it!

6. If you will remember in this morning’s message from Daniel 11 I told you about the 400-450 “years of silence” between the Old and New Testaments.

   And remember I told you that during those four centuries, God didn’t raise up any PROPHETS nor were there any PROPHECIES.

7. There is something “deafening” about silence! I believe during those 4+ centuries when the nation to Israel’s North and South were warring with each other and traipsing all over Israel, that the Jewish people were running to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but could not find it! BECAUSE THERE WAS A FAMINE OF THE WORD!
Well that was “THE NATURE OF THE FAMINE THEN,” let’s consider......

II. The Nature of The Famine of The Word of God Now

1. Please turn with me over to the New Testament to the Book of II Timothy.

   2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NKJV)

   1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

   2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

   3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

   4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

   5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2. This generation has been labeled as “the most biblically illiterate generation of Christians since the Church was established two thousand years ago.”

3. Does that indictment against our generation trouble you as much as it does me?

   Is this indictment against us true? Is it an unfair judgment?

   Is it possible we are the ones Paul was describing in verses 3, 4?
4. **Just how bad is it?**

According to a recent Gallop poll........

*Less than 50% of those surveyed knew Genesis was the first book in the Bible.

*Less than 25% could name even one Old Testament prophet.

*Only 34% knew who preached the Sermon on The Mount.

*Only 30% could name the four gospels.

*And of those surveyed the vast majority of them could list no more than 4 of the Ten Commandments.

5. **Why is there such a famine of hearing the word of God today?**

*Is it because we don't have enough opportunities to hear?  Absolutely NOT!

We have small churches, mid-size Churches and giant Churches.  We have wild, emotional, charismatic Churches and cold, unemotional orthodox Churches, and every kind of Church experience in between.

*Is it because we don't have enough PREACHERS to proclaim the word?  Absolutely NOT!

We have more preachers in this country than any other country in the world.  Now granted not every preacher is preaching the truth of God’s word, in fact many of them are not.

But there are still a lot of preachers who preaching the truth and upholding the standard of God’s word.
6. Well if the famine of God’s word is NOT because of the lack of opportunities to hear the word. And its not because of the lack of preachers to preach the word, then what is it?

7. The answer is, it’s for the same reason there was a famine of God’s word in Amos’ day. And that is the vast majority of God’s people today hear the word of God every week, but choose NOT to LISTEN or OBEY God’s word.

According to the Barna Research group only 7% of Americans who profess to be Christians live by a BIBLICAL worldview. To live by “a biblical worldview” means one sees the world through the eyes of scripture and bases his or her lifestyle, habits, priorities and relationships on what the Bible says.

This means 93% of those who profess to be Christians in this country live by a HUMANISTIC worldview. In other words, 93% of professing Christians really don’t care what God’s word says, they are going to live their life however they want regardless of what the scripture teaches!

8. As it was in Amos’ day, so it is in ours! God will only put up with His people refusing to listen and obey His word for just so long before He brings judgment upon us.

Is it possible that the famine for hearing the word of the LORD in our day and time will soon lead to a famine of even finding the word of the LORD?

9. Is it possible we are growing closer and closer to a time when we will have to search to and fro just to find a Church that is still preaching and teaching the word of God?

Is it possible we are growing closer and closer to the time when it will become harder to find faithful followers of Christ who are truly living by the word of God?
Is it possible we are getting closer and closer to the time when the government of our land will impose sanctions on us that make it against the law to preach and teach from the Bible in public?

Is it possible we are getting closer to the time when our government will seize our Bibles and make it against the law to own one?

10. Perhaps if I had suggested these possibilities from the pulpit twenty or twenty five years ago, people would have thought I was crazy!

But I think all of us here this evening realizes these possibilities don’t seen so far-fetched now do they?

11. Perhaps we are closer to seeing a famine of the word of God in this country more than ever before!

C O N C L U S I O N

What can we do? I believe Jesus gives us the answer to that question. No less than eight times in the New Testament, Jesus said, “Let him who has ears to hear, hear the word of the LORD.”

I have ears! You have ears! Most all of us has ears!

But that’s not what Jesus means is it? He is admonishing us to NOT only listen to the word of the LORD with our ears, but to listen with our MINDS and HEARTS.

He is admonishing us to “SHAMA”......to “LISTEN INTELLIGENTLY” to READ and HEED.......... TO LISTEN and OBEY the word of the LORD!

Is there a famine of God’s word in your life? Are you spiritually starving or malnourished because you have neglected to read and study the word of God?
I want to challenge you tonight to rekindle your love for the word of GOD! Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.”

**HOLD UP THE BIBLE:** Brothers and sisters, here is your life-giving soul food, **COME……..EAT……..READ……..STUDY……..LISTEN……..OBEY!**