



1



When my son Jonathan was in elementary school, I began reading him the *Chronicles of Narnia*, a set of fantasy books by C.S. Lewis. In the most well-known book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, four children from England are relocated to a farmhouse during WWII to escape the bombing in the city. While exploring the farmhouse, Lucy and her three brothers discover an old wardrobe while playing hide-n-seek. Upon entering the wardrobe, they found themselves mysteriously transported to the land of Narnia, a place filled with mythical creatures and animals who could speak. They learned that a witch had frozen the land for many years in ice and snow. In a conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, the children discovered that something was about to change, for Aslan was on the move and would make things right.

“Is he a man?” asked Lucy.

“Aslan a man!” said Mr. Beaver sternly.

Certainly not. I tell you he is King of the wood and the son of the great emperor-beyond-the-

sea. Don’t you know who is the King of the Beasts? Aslan is a lion – the Lion, the great lion.”

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake” said Mrs. Beaver; “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”<sup>1</sup>

Aslan the Lion reflects the imagery that the biblical prophet Amos used when speaking about God, for the prophet portrayed God as a lion (3:8), one who roars (1:2) when confronting injustice. The imagery echoes the Lion in Narnia—one who might not always be safe, but one who is always good.



2

On behalf of God, Amos complained that people were treating one another unfairly. In the second chapter of the Book of Amos, the prophet wrote:

They buy and sell upstanding people.  
People for them are only things—ways of making money.

They'd sell a poor man for a pair of shoes.  
They'd sell their own grandmother!

They grind the penniless into the dirt,  
shove the luckless into the ditch. (*The Message*)

Things were getting so bad that God was fed up; God was so frustrated, that God was no longer delighted when people gathered for worship. Amos warned the people that God “despises your festivals and takes no delight in your solemn assemblies,” or as *The Message Bible* puts it:

“I can't stand your religious meetings.  
I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.

I want nothing to do with your religion projects,  
your pretentious slogans and goals.

I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,  
your public relations and image making.  
I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.  
When was the last time you sang to me?

These are serious words, words full of frustration and anger. God was so upset that God could no longer enjoy being around the people who worshiped on holy days—those who brought harm to people the rest of the week. God could only roar, as a lion in the forest.

Have you ever been so angry that you couldn't stand to be around someone? That you felt like roaring? So frustrated that you had to leave the house, get away from everyone and cool off?

On most days, I doubt that we imagine God as being this angry, for we mostly emphasize God's loving nature, God's compassion, God's forgiveness. But even with love, we sometimes get angry. Have you ever been angry at your spouse or children, those people you love the most? Maybe you've even felt like roaring at them.



3

When we look around the world, roaring with anger might be the best response at some of the things happening. I imagine God roars with anger when a man, who had been discharged from the Air Force for assaulting his wife and stepson, was still able to purchase guns and shoot and kill 26 people, ranging from an unborn baby and mother to a 77 year old, who had gathered for worship last Sunday morning in a church in Texas. The grief is so overwhelming that the remaining church members don't want to enter the church again, so it's now closed, with the possibility of tearing it down. When such violence occurs, I'm angry, and I'm sure God must roar with anger.

This week someone entered my office filled with anger at what happened and roared, "Are you going to say something about what happened in Texas? Something needs to be done. This gun thing has gotten out of hand."

I wondered, what *should* I say this morning, for every time a mass shooting occurs, people line up on both sides of the issue in this country—from

those wanting to ban guns, to those who suggest that people kill, not guns, and that we have rights to carry guns to protect ourselves.

I sometimes wonder how people might have replied to the prophet Amos' harsh words. When Amos echoed God's roar of anger by saying, "I don't like that you sell poor people in order to purchase shoes for yourself," some may have objected, "But I have a right to protect my feet."

When God roared through the prophet Amos, "I can't stand your worship any longer, for you don't care for those in need," some may have complained, "That's not fair. We have a right to ignore those in need around us."

If Amos lived today, I wonder what he might say about the violence and injustice he sees. If he used today's modern technology, what message might he send? Maybe it would sound like this:

I can't stand the way you harm one another  
Using your freedom to kill and maim  
You've gone beyond protecting yourself to  
creating a culture of violence.



4

You have grown numb to shootings and wars, viewing them as normal parts of life.

You proclaim, “I have my rights to do what I want,” but what about the rights of those who lie dead on church pews?



If Amos spoke today he would probably include words he roared 2700 years ago: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (NRSV). Or another way to hear God’s roar sounds like this: “Do you know what I want? I want justice—oceans of it. I want fairness—rivers of it. That’s what I want. That’s all I want.” (*The Message*)

I think Amos wanted the same thing we want today: for people to treat one another with fairness and compassion. For people to not inflict harm on one another just to get what they want.

Maybe it’s time to roar, to join Amos’ voice of the lion’s roar, a lion who is not always safe when angry—but who’s always good.

You may be wondering, “But how can my voice make a difference. I’m only one person in the noise of cacophony.” Amos could have replied in a similar manner, feeling as though he was not qualified, for did you notice while listening to the scripture what Amos did for a living? The book of Amos begins with a brief introduction and lists Amos’ credentials: one of the shepherds in the town of Tekoa. Not a politician. Not a recognized leader in a major city. Not a religious leader. But a shepherd. A common, ordinary person going about his daily job, just like the rest of us gathered here this morning.



Amos heard God roar in frustration. God was not happy with the way people were treated. Amos heard God roar and echoed that sound to God’s people. Listen. Do you hear God’s roar? When the lion roars, what do *you* hear?



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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, <https://storiesforpreaching.com/is-he-safe/>