

## Week 9 – Amos

**Connect:** choose 1 question and discuss for 5-7 minutes.

- Describe one incident where you have seen justice and righteousness prevail—where what is wrong is made right.
- Name one person from fiction or history that you admire as an advocate for justice and say why.

**Read these passages aloud:**

**Amos 2:6-3:15** - God's Judgment on Israel

**Amos 5:21-24** - The Day of the LORD, a dark day

**Amos 6:11-14** – God's punishment of Israel

**Amos 7:14-17** - Amos' call.

**Amos 9:11-12** – Restoration of David's kingdom

**Engage the text as a group:**

1. What do you **observe**?

- God has strong words for Israel's religious practices: "I hate, I despise your festivals..."

2. What **questions** do you have of these texts?

- Why would Israel equate economic prosperity with God's favor?
- Why weren't keeping the religious practices themselves enough?

**Why does Amos matter?**

The book of Amos matters because it shows us how deeply God cares for the lowly, the downtrodden, the oppressed, and the marginalized. The book of Amos shows us that Israel wrongly understood material prosperity or economic security to equal God's favor. In Amos, God condemns the practices of the wealthy in Israel who built up and hoarded wealth at the expense of the poor, and God shows compassion for the poor who are being oppressed.

Right now, the richest nation on earth and the most powerful in military might is the United States. Many who live in the U.S. experience material prosperity and the comfort and luxuries that come along with that. However, there are still many who live in poverty and struggle with how to get out of it. Sociologists, economists, and psychologists point to the shrinking of living-wage employment opportunities, institutional racism, the variations in educational opportunities, and the burden of health care costs as a few of the reasons why it can be so challenging for poor people in a very wealthy country to access any of that wealth for themselves. Historians also remind us that the US economy was built through slave labor and the genocide of the native peoples. We must not ignore or forget that. We need to be honest about the history of the US and its persistent effects to today, and to take seriously God's command to let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

To be clear: the United States is not ancient Israel. But, some may be tempted to confuse the United States' material prosperity with God's favor and blessing, as the nation of Israel did. The book of Amos shows us that this is not necessarily the case. Israel didn't understand that habitually doing the rituals God required while persisting in economics, customs, and politics that further oppressed the poor was breaking the very rituals they were supposed to be honoring.

The book of Amos provides an opportunity for us to ask ourselves: in what ways are we paying lip service in our churches to God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves, but not living it out? How can our social and economic practices, our language, our friendships, our politics, our charitable giving or volunteering relieve the financial pressures of those who live around us? God required of those listening in the book of Amos to do

right toward the poor as an expression of their faith. God requires the same of us today.

**Put this book in one sentence: “In the book of Amos, God \_\_\_\_\_.”**

### **How Does Amos Point Us to Jesus?**

Amos proclaims God’s judgment on Israel for its sin in the way it treats the poor and privileges the rich, and God’s judgment comes upon Israel for this sin. But the prophecy at the end of the chapter tells of God re-establishing the house of David and when God will restore the fortunes of God’s people.

Jesus is the king who would reestablish the line of David, the king of Israel who would restore the fortunes of God’s people, the true king who rules with righteousness and peace. When Jesus begins his ministry, in the synagogue he announces that, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus came to set the oppressed free, to heal the broken, to restore the poor. Jesus came to be the king who establishes justice and righteousness, especially for the marginalized.

Also in Jesus, we see God’s interaction with the poor—he honored them, loved them, welcomed them, claimed them as God’s own. Jesus’ interaction with the poor was never oppression, never rejection, never taking advantage of them or keeping them downtrodden. Jesus is the king who stoops down to lift up his most downtrodden people.

### **So Now What?**

- [For students] Where did you serve for Streetfest, and was it a place that addresses some of these issues raised in the book of Amos?
- Name one place you are happy to give money to or volunteer because it is a place committed to relieving poverty or promoting justice.
- Why does the Community Care Fund matter?
- If you could change one thing about a system in the US or in your home country (e.g. education/health care/criminal justice, etc.) what would you change and why? How could you work toward that right where you are now? Who could help you?
- How can we look for God differently because we know this story?

### **Video:**

For context of Amos, watch: “Read Scripture: Amos”,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGgWaPGpGz4>

### **Close in prayer:**

*God, we confess the ways we have participated in, benefited from, or remained silent about oppressive systems, unethical practices, or ungodly ways that have harmed others. Forgive us, Father. Teach us to love justice with our whole lives, through generosity of time and money, expressions of prayer and service, and the joy of loving and living as Jesus did. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.*