**Amos: God’s Justice**

Background to Amos:

Amos was a farmer of sycamore fig trees (Amos 7:14) from Tekoa (Amos 1:1) in Judah—the Southern Kingdom, but he was a prophet of God to Samaria/Israel—the Northern kingdom around 760 BC, during the very prosperous reign of Jereboam II.

His job, not an enviable one, was to go to Samaria and declare that God would destroy Israel.

Amos is thought to be the earliest of the written prophets. He was a man of the countryside, like Micah, but unlike Isaiah.

Israel is doing really well economically, but the wealthy class are getting richer and richer at the expense of the poor—especially of the poor farmers who are being pushed off the land.

The message of Amos is God’s judgment is coming in Israel/Samaria because of their idolatry and their lack of showing biblical justice to the poor and the needy.

Amos’ passion is for justice—what we might call social justice—to characterize the people of God.

The sermons from Hosea were full of hope and grace, and relatively light on justice and judgment. Amos is the opposite, so get read for a tough sermon.

Amos 5:1-13

v. 2 Fallen is Virgin Israel! Amos says this at a time when Israel was still quite prosperous.

However, in 735 BC Assyria took the northernmost part of Israel and in 722 BC Asyria, under Shalmaneezer and Sargon, utterly destroyed Israel and Samaria, never to re-form as a nation again. 38 years after this prophecy.

v. 4 Seek me and live. Do not seek Beth-el Bethel was the center of idolatrous worship of Baal. Bethel was where Jeroboam had set up golden calves to worship Yaweh. Bethel was also the center of wealth and political power.

v. 6 Seek the Lord and live. Otherwise God will sweep through your life like a fire to devour it.

v. 7-17 The sins of Israel.

v. 8 God: I made the Pleiades and Orion—the two most prominent of the constellations in the night sky. The Lord is my name.

v. 9 I am the one with the power to destroy and bring cities to ruin.

I am calling you out on your sins.

v. 10 You hate those who call for justice for the poor.

v. 11 You devise unfair systems whereby the poor are taxed into poverty and slavery but the rich escape those taxes and get richer and richer.

You build great mansions, but you will not live in them.

v. 12 You oppress the innocent and you are corrupt-take bribes.

You create systems whereby the poor cannot seek justice.

Last week a sister who helps mentally challenged students lamented that she spends all her time helping the children of the rich families who sue the city to provide care for their rich children, while the children of the poor get almost no attention.

v. 13 Those who want to do right and to help the poor, the needy and the disadvantaged are intimidated into silence. This is Israel!

Let me get political just once here…

120 million covid-19 vaccine doses in the US, and some countries have had zero!

Are we at all concerned about that?

America first!!!!

What about the vast majority in the world who live in abject poverty. What about them first.

We hate “outsourcing”

What about the poor in Philippines, in India.

And we complain about their accents!!! What about compassion! What about justice.

We spend 800 billion on defense spending, but when we spend 2 billion on aid to poor countries, people scream bloody murder!

What would Amos say about that?

v. 14 Seek good, not evil and live. Those who pursue selfish gain are not those who seek good.

First: Seek the Lord and live (v. 7) Then seek good, not evil and live (v. 14)

“good” in what sense? v. 15 justice in the courts.

Then God will be with you as you say he is.

Many people are convinced that God is with them, but if they do not practice justice and if they continue in idolatry, then they are deceived.

There are many deceived people in Bakersfield.

How: By maintaining justice in the courts. By defending the defenseless.

v. 15b. If you repent, perhaps God will relent on bringing calamity—at least on the remnant.

v. 16 There will be wailing!

Amos 1:18-27 The Day of the Lord is coming.

The Day of the Lord.

TDOTL: Amos 3:2, Amos 5:18-20 Obadiah 15, Micah 3:12 Zephaniah 1:14-2:3 Is. 2:6-22 Is. 13:6-13 Is. 34:4, 8-10 Jer. 46:10 Lam. 2:22 Ezek. 13:5 Ezek 30:3 Zech. 14:1-2 Malachi 4:5

Joel 1:15-2:2 Joel 2:28-31 The theme of Joel is TDOTL

Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

The Day of the Lord signifies “The moment when Jehovah grasps the reigns, which he seems to have held slackly before, when the currents of his moral rule, which have been running sluggishly, receive a mysterious quickening, and the Lord’s work on the earth is at last fully performed.”

Or “The Day in which Jehovah will manifest himself as God.”

The Day of the Lord is a day that God’s kingdom comes with power to build up or to destroy.

Israel 722 BC Judah 701 BC Judah 586 BC the flood, the Exodus from Egypt.

Pentecost (Acts 2) and the day that Jesus comes back which will be the last and greaters Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord is coming, folks!

v. 18 The Day of the Lord is a day of Woe! The vast majority, even the religious should stop looking forward to it. Israel in Hosea’s time was very religious. They did all the sacrifices and ceremonies.

v.19 Like escaping a lion, only to be caught by a bear.

Like escaping into a home, leaning against the wall to rest, and there is a snake to bite you.

There is no escaping the Day of the Lord!!!

v. 21-23 I hate your worship services. They make me sick!

Why? Because you do not seek justice. Those who talk a great religious game on Sunday, but live like the world—their assemblies are a stench to God (v. 21)

v. 23 Get your “Christian” songs out of my face. I am tired of hearing them.

May this NEVER be us!

How could we become like this? We take the name Christian, but we act like the world.

v. 24 But let justice roll on like a river. Resisting God’s justice is like trying to stand in a raging river. God’s justice is like an avalanche. God’s justice is like a flash flood.

God’s righteousness is like a never-failing stream

v. 25-27 In your youth you were close to me. You were zealous as a young Christian.

But you returned to your idols, and now I will send you back into captivity “beyond Damascus” (ie into Assyria, which his exactly what happened in 722 BC).

Amos 6:1-7

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion. Woe to those who feel secure in their wealth, in their job, in their country, in their education, in their talents.

Are you complacent in your spiritual life? Are you “at ease” with sin and injustice?

v. 4 You lie on beds of ivory. You have lots of good stuff. Yours is the prosperity gospel. You find your strength, your comfort in your wealth and your hard work, in your retirement plan.

v. 7 You who live in luxury and ignore the poor and the outcast, you will be the first to go into exile. You will be the first to lose your salvation.

This is us in the US, and to a lesser extent, but still real, in our church.

I was talking to Widler in Haiti this week. We have no idea how these people live.

Amos 6:8-16

v. 8 God abhors our worldly pride in our own accomplishments.

God detests the things we rely on other than him.

So, he will bring on the day of the Lord.

v. 9 When this happens, people will be hiding from God. v. 10 Hush! Don’t tell God I am in here.

v. 12 Do horses run on rocky crags? I think not!

Do oxen plow the sea? Definitely not!

Even crazier: you have turned God’s justice into poison.

v. 13 You rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debar

Lo-Debar = lit. no thing. Your victories are hollow things.

Skip forward to Amos 7:10-17

The priest Amaziah is against Amos’preaching. If we preach righteousness and justice, we will not be popular in American churches. We probably will not be invited back.

v. 10 We cannot bear your words. Sounds like 2 Tim 4:1-4 Preach the word: be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come (and has now come) when people will no not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

Our itching words do not want to hear talk about materialism or selfishness or greed. We want to hear that we are just fine like we are.

Amos 7:12-13 Amaziah says to Amos: Get out, you seer. Go back to Judah. Stop bringing the word of God to us. This is the king’s sanctuary. This is where the rich and the powerful hang out (despite the fact that they claim to be God’s people). We do not want you here.

v. 14 I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet. I am a farmer of sheep and sycamore-figs. But God sent me to you, and you tell me to be quiet.

Not a good idea!

v. 17 You will go into exile. You will lose your place with God. You will lose your salvation.

Finish Amos 9:11-15 There is hope. A remnant (v. 12) will be saved.

In that day (Acts 2) I will restore David’s fallen shelter. I will restore my kingdom.

I will create something new. I pray that we are that thing!

v. 12 All nations (Acts 2)

v. 13 A beautiful picture… Abundant fruit and blessing.

v. 14 I will bring you back from exile (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon)

v. 14 The ruined cities will be rebuilt. v. 15 never again to be uprooted.

Lives will be rebuilt in God’s image.

Amos’ message from God for us.

We need to seek God, so that we can live.

But to do this, we need to seek good, not evil.

This means overcoming sin, but also seeking justice for the disadvantaged. The poor, the alien, the disabled, the single moms, the very old. It means being willing to get off our ivory beds and making real change.

Unlike Israel and Amaziah, we need to hear the Word of the Lord.

If we do so, God will call us back from exile into a beautiful rebuilt city—a kingdom. The kingdom of God.

This is a place of abundant fruit, of safety and of security in God’s arms.

“Never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them.”