

Amos: True Worship - Amos 5:18-27

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[0 : 00] Imagine that we were to go to a new town and go to church, but we didn't quite know what time the church service started. And it turns out that it had already started by the time you got there.

And the pastor was halfway through his sermon when we kind of would scoot into the back row and take a seat quietly and enjoy the rest of the service.

Well, that's kind of what we're doing today in our text that we find ourselves in today is because we're in the middle of a sermon that Amos had already been delivering is for our text.

You see, Amos is a prophet in the Old Testament and he is declaring the words of the Lord to the nation of Israel. Well, he's already declared judgment on them and then he described that judgment and tried to, if you will, cause repentance to the nation of Israel by delivering three sermons.

We've already looked at one. We've looked at two. And we're in the middle of the third sermon. Last week, Pastor Eric, the third sermon begins in chapter five verse one and Pastor Eric preached that message versus one through 17.

[1 : 11] And that's the first half, if you will, of the third message that Amos is declaring to the people of Israel. So we are walking into a middle of a church service in the middle of a sermon in our text for today.

So our text, as Josh has already read it, picks up in verse 18. So let's be reminded a little bit of what has already been spoken by Amos to the nation of Israel in the first part of this sermon.

A real quick review. If we want to hop down in verse 11, chapter five verse 11, we see that it says, therefore, because you trample on the poor and exact taxes of grain on him. So Israel was in the habit of exploiting the poor.

And we see down in verse 12 that the righteous, instead of esteeming the righteous, they exploited also the righteous. And so the righteous have no place, the poor have no place, they cannot seem to get justice in Israel.

And the whole tenor of it is mentioned three times. You can see what the Lord is desiring for the nation of Israel. What does He want the response to be? Look with me in verse four, seek me and live.

[2 : 33] That phrase is also used in verse six, seek the Lord and live. Look with me in verse 14, seek good and not evil that you may live.

The tenor of the message is, listen Israel, seek me and live. You have sinned grievously, seek me and live.

And also in verse 14, listen to the Lord's heart. The Lord God of hosts will be with you. Israel, I want to dwell with you is what the Lord is declaring, and you must seek me in order to live.

So that's so far kind of what's in the background of the first part of the message. But Israel isn't listening. And so now we see the second part of the message and it begins with this, whoa.

And one of the things that Israel is not getting that is going to be the big idea, the big point of the message today is that there are ethical implications for being a people of God.

[3 : 44] There are ethical implications of being a people of God. And one of the things that we see first off is that they had a misunderstanding about what the day of the Lord is.

And so look with me in verse 18, whoa to you who desire the day of the Lord. And then look with me in verse 20, is it not the day of the Lord darkness?

So there's this day of the Lord here that is mentioned two times in verses 18 through 20. And there's a, and my bullet point reads that the day of the Lord will shock some.

Now why is that? There existed in Israel a hopeful optimism concerning the day of the Lord. It says, notice and with me in verse 18, it says they desired it.

That word for desired is used also for to satisfy someone's hunger or to satisfy someone's thirst. So they longed for this day of the Lord like you would for to satisfy thirst or hunger.

[4 : 47] And they passionately yearned for a time when they thought for God's deliverance for the nation of Israel. They perceived that the day of the Lord and the deliverance of Israel would be one in the same.

And so they longed for this. And they had in some ways good reason because there is, when Gideon was victorious over the Midianites, it is called in Isaiah 9.4, it says the day of Midian. The day of vengeance is when David overtook the Philistines. And then there was another phrase called the day of Yahweh when Moses overtook Pharaoh.

So they were used to this day of the Lord. This was a day of victory for Israel. However, their understanding is ill-informed.

And so God informs them that their anticipation and earnest desire for this day of the Lord that we see here, it's ill-informed because he says in verse 20, is it not darkness and not light?

[6 : 01] Is it not these things? And to illustrate this, Isaiah writes about the day of the Lord and this is what he read. This is what he says, read with me here in verses 1 through 3, draw near, O nations, to hear, to give attention, O peoples, let all the earth hear, and all that fills it, the world and all that it comes from it.

For the Lord is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their hosts. He has devoted them to destruction. He has given them over to slaughter. Their slain shall be cast out.

Their stench of their corpses shall rise. Their mountains should flow with their blood. So far, this is not a cheerful. But this is what is awaiting the nations on the day of the Lord.

For the Lord has said, has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. This day of the Lord has two, when we read the corpus of Scripture, all of the Bible, we see it has two kind of implications.

There is an immediacy to the day of the Lord, but there's also a future day of the Lord. It's used in that sense, and that sense of day of the Lord, this future yet, is a day when God will execute His justice on the earth.

[7 : 26] So it is often anticipated like a day of wrath. So they are ill-informed.

So one of the ways he talks about it, he says, woe to you who desire the day of the Lord. Why would you have the day of the Lord? Why?

And so to illustrate it, you can think of Charlie Chapman. In the era of silent film, Charlie Chapman was asked by a woman, hey, how do you get people to laugh? And so she revisited the common scene.

Again, this is in the era of silent film when a person were to slip on a banana peel and fall. And so she was asking on that scenario of Charlie Chapman, how do you get someone to laugh?

And do you focus the camera first on the banana peel and then zoom out to the woman? Or do you start with the woman, then the banana peel? And he said, neither. And he said, you want to focus on the banana peel, then the woman.

[8 : 29] And as she steps over the banana peel, as to avoid danger, she slips into a manhole. And that's how you get people to laugh. And so that same sense of irony is being used here by Amos, because look with me in verse 19.

What will the day of the Lord be like as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him? And then he reads and went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall and a serpent bit him.

What is Amos trying to communicate? What is he communicating here? That there is a man who thought he was going to clearly avert danger. I'm running from a lion only to meet a bear.

He's trying to avert danger for it only to find him. And then what is he illustrating here with a man leaning against a house? Is that a man thought he could just find a little relief and just lean on the wall and only to have a snake bite him.

And so if you think the day of the Lord is going to be a day when you can avert danger or you can find relief, Israel, you have another thing coming to you.

[9 : 47] That's the point in this irony that is being used here. There will be no way to avert danger or find relief when the day of the Lord happens.

There is no escape. That's the point. He says in verse 20, is it not darkness and not light and gloom with no brightness in it?

Darkness depicts here a disaster where it's clear that what is when it's dark this weekend I just bought this week.

We had my father-in-law and his wife Jeannie who was staying with us and we bought nightlights because we are newer to this house and we didn't know how dark it was in our basement where they were staying.

And so they were like, can we get some nightlights? We have to see something. And so what is what are nightlights trying to do? What does darkness do when there is no clear sight that's possible? Danger lurks, enemies hide, pitfalls beckon.

[10 : 53] This is what happens when darkness is there. And so Amos is saying, listen, this day of the Lord, there's no clear sight possible. Danger lurks, enemies hide, pitfalls beckon in the day of the Lord.

And there is no light depicting safety. Don't we all like it when there's light where there's clarity of vision, the ability to catch the full picture of something, to see one's way fully to have safety by having light so that one might see.

And this is what's being communicated. And so Amos is correcting their understanding. You have this thing that you long for Israel, this day of the Lord.

Well, let me tell you something. It's nothing like what you think it is. You will not be able to avert danger. You will not be able to find relief. It will come upon you. It is not something you want to look forward to.

Because you have been perverting justice. You have been taking advantage of the poor. You have no way possible to be looking forward to this event.

[12 : 03] You have been behaving as not the people of God.

It reminds me that the day of the Lord will shock some when he had folks ask him, Jesus, in the New Testament.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. It will be like the one who will, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day, many will come to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name or cast out demons in your name and do mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

There's going to be a day that is shocking to some, that accompanies the day of the Lord accompanies when the Lord returns. And it will also be shocking to some.

[13 : 09] And notice here in this claim with Jesus in the New Testament that not a verbal claim of one who follows Jesus knows the Lord. Not a mental assent to the knowledge that Jesus existed will save someone.

That knowing the Lord is not a demonstration of spiritual power or spiritual insight that will save someone. Do we not prophesy in your name, they said?

A person may seem like a Christian in the eye of another, but still be an evildoer in the sight of the Lord. And this person is sent away. I'm sorry, I never knew you, depart from me.

You're a worker of lawlessness. So you say, well, Scott, how do you then avoid this day of the Lord and meeting the Lord? How do you prepare for that?

One asked Jesus one day, a similar question. They asked Jesus, what must we do to do the works that the God requires? And listen to God's, Jesus' response to someone asking, what is the work that is required of us?

[14 : 21] And notice the work that Jesus responds with. He says, the work of God is this, to believe in the one whom he sent.

This is what the Lord requires, believe in Jesus, in His person and His work. That He came, He condescended to earth, He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, He died for sin, paid the penalty of sin, rose from the grave, that all who trust and believe in Christ might live and have their sins forgiven.

Church speaking pleasantries does not save you, nor forgive sin. Coming to church does not save you, nor forgive sin. Doing good does not save you, or forgive sin.

Being raised in the church does not save you, or forgive sin. Praying before meals does not save you, or forgive sin. Being a good person, better than your neighbor, does not forgive you, or forgive sin.

Save you or forgive sin. Saying a prayer does not save you or forgive sin. Believe in Christ, the one whom he sent. Believe in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ, for salvation and for the forgiveness of sin.

[15:49] All that to say, the day of the Lord will shock some. May it not be shocking to the people of God. Second point that we see in this sermon is that God is the end of spiritual practices.

Read with me in verses 21 through 26. I hate, I despise your feasts.

I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. The peace offerings and your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.

Take away from me the noise of your songs and the melody of your harps. I will not listen. Look at all the spiritual practices that Israel is participating in.

It's not that they're not religious or an irreligious people, they're very religious people. But why is the Lord so disgusted and that which should be in some ways acceptable to him?

[16:53] Notice how the Lord states so clearly his disgust or disapproval of what he is witnessing. Notice first in verse 21.

Notice he says, I hate. And then second two words, I despise. If I said I hate, I despise ice cream, which I do not.

It would clearly paint a picture of what it is that I so despise. Secondly, his disapproval and his disgust is referred to the pronouns that he uses.

Notice what he says. Your feasts, your solemn assemblies, you offer me your burnt offerings, your grain offerings. It's not offerings that are done and for the Lord.

It's what you are doing. I can't stand it. And notice thirdly, his overt statement of disgust in verse 21.

[17:57] I hate, I despise, I take no delight. I do not accept them in verse 22. I do not look upon them. Look in verse 23. I do not listen.

And then verse 23, take away from me. His disgust is clearly. He will not look upon the spiritual practices that Israel is participating in.

But notice they're very religious. They're keeping festivals and feasts, their solemn assemblies, their burnt offerings, the grain offerings, peace offerings, the fattened animals. They're even singing worship songs, songs and they're playing music harps.

All of these things are done. So what is the problem? Israel envisioned their ritual practices as ends in themselves.

Let me illustrate it this way. Let's assume we were back in the day when Wendy and I were dating one another and I just met her and she says, hey Scott, can we go have coffee to get to know one another?

[19:01] And I say, oh no, no, no, no, I got this new phone. You see, I can call you, I can text you. Oh look, look, look, we can even like video chat and do like FaceTime. And this is so cool. Look at this new picture.

I can even feature. I can even take a picture while we're video chatting and isn't this fun, isn't this cool? And I refuse to meet with her because I can do everything I want to with over my phone.

Yeah, no, yeah, thank you. That would be terrible dating advice. So what would I be doing? I would be making the phone itself and my infatuation with the phone and all the features that this phone can do be the end of my relationship with Wendy.

When the end of my relationship with Wendy is Wendy, not my phone. It's in that same way that God is so upset.

They're doing all of these spiritual practices, these acts of worship, and they're making those the end. But God is the end of those practices.

[20:14] And so the Lord is saying, stop this stuff. I cannot stand when you do this. Stop bringing me those offerings. Stop it. I can't stand it.

I despise it. I hate it. The Lord is saying, instead of seeing their offering as a way to honor the Lord, they saw the offering as a box to check.

Instead of seeing the offering as an act of obedience to the Lord, they saw the offering as duty to complete. Instead of making pilgrimage and celebrating the feast to the Lord and remembering what He has done, they go with their friends to ensure that they are seen at all costs and making certain they have something to post on social media.

Instead of singing songs to declare that which is true about God and to worship Him for what He has done and who He is and to remind one another of these truths, they sing songs from rote memory as a part of the service because that's what you do when you sing. Instead of playing the harp as an avenue, as an expression to worship the Lord and lead others into humbly worshiping God, they just played the harp to impress or to receive attention to ensure their mom was present to receive a compliment that they had done well.

[21 : 38] Whatever it is, they saw these spiritual practices as ends to themselves but these spiritual practices are a means to have a relationship with the Lord.

Remember, the Lord was saying in the first part of this message, seek me and live. I am the end of these spiritual practices. But these same mistakes can be made today by you, by me. Why do you go to church? Why did you hop in your car today and come to church? Did you come to attend and gather corporately as a saint, as an opportunity to hear from the Lord, as a word is preached and proclaimed, and a desire to know Him more and become like Him? Or do you come to church today because it's a family ritual? Do you come to gather corporately to use your gifts to serve one another and to bless? Or have you come to be seen and to be served? Why did you come to church? Was it to commune with the Lord? Or is it just a habit of what you do every Sunday?

[23 : 00] Why do you read your Bible? Why do you pray? Is it to commune with the Lord and to hear from Him and be transformed and renew your mind?

Or is it so that you have information that you've read in God's Word that you can compare yourself to others and think, well, I don't smoke and I don't chew and I don't hang out with those who do? Because I know that's wrong. Why do you read your Bible? Why do you pray? If not careful, we can make these things like our phone and make them the end in themselves when the point of God's Word and spiritual disciplines reading God's Word, praying, gathering as a church body. The Lord is the end of all of that. He's the end of these spiritual practices and Israel had that mistake and we can easily make that mistake as well. And that's why the Lord is saying, I hate these things, I despise them.

So we get to that section. After those spiritual disciplines are mentioned, we come to the third point.

[24 : 32] That one's heart and life gives evidence of knowing God. What was so hard for the Lord to have all of these worship practices being done is what they also were doing is they were exploiting the poor.

It's hard to receive something when you're doing things that are antithetical to God Himself. And so this verse that we're about to read is the championing verse for the social justice movement. It was also a verse that was used by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in April 3rd, 1968. He was in a setting where he was, and I watched the whole thing this last week to make sure I was informed correctly. The day before he was assassinated, he was speaking at the Temple of Memphis there in Tennessee.

And in that speech, he quoted this verse, Amos 5, verse 24, and put yourself back in 1968.

[25 : 46] Dr. King, he was preaching or sharing one night, and he was upset that the white churches were not participating in helping the cause of the African-American community.

And so Dr. King said this. He was discouraged by the few pastors and churches that would help join him in the work of bringing justice to the black community. So he says this, let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. What was God communicating through Amos in the use of this verse? Israel, you exploit the poor. You bear false witness. You testify falsely. You take advantage of others. You consume. You consume. Remember a few sermons back, like the cows of Peshawn. And you don't even think about your fellow man. You consume. It's all about you. You exploit the vulnerable. You exploit the righteous. You do not uphold what is right.

[26 : 52] You bear false witness. You have winter homes. You have a summer home. We've looked at this already in the book of Amos. Yet you do not use those things to bless others. They're status symbols to impress others and gorge yourself with comfort. You're selfish with your wealth. Israel was selfish with their property. And so what is the Lord saying here? Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

He is saying you have these spiritual practices, but these spiritual practices, I hate them. I despise them. You're making them the end of themselves.

Plus it is so contrary to a people who know me. And so what I'm after is your heart and your life should give evidence of knowing God. And it doesn't. So let righteousness and justice flow.

[27 : 55] Imitate from you as a people. And this is how Dr. King was referring to it as well. Notice the continual flow of justice and righteousness that should emanate from a people of God.

Look how it's stated here. Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. There should be no end to righteousness and justice for a people of God.

This behavior that you have been doing Israel is so such an anathema to me as God would be speaking. It's such an anathema. You're not behaving like a people of God.

It's like you don't even know me anymore. And so some commentators though look at this verse and they say, Because of these things what will happen to you Israel and is justice and righteousness will flow down on you and bear down on you in the day of the Lord.

So some would say that as well. Regardless, you get the idea of what the Lord is communicating. And then he says, did you bring sacrifices and offering during the 40 years in the wilderness of house Israel?

[29 : 18] So then notice the last thing we will say and we'll be dismissed here. God doesn't threaten idly and judgment is coming.

So in verses 26 and 27 he says, you shall take up Sikuth as your king and Kyrion your star God, your images that you have made for yourselves.

What are these two characters that we read in verse 26? There are little idols that little figurines that were being made of Saturn, the star God and a God of war.

These are foreign deities not of the nation of Israel. And they've made little figurines as your images that you have made for yourself.

Sorry. And these were abominations to the Lord, these figurines that they had made after these foreign deities.

[30 : 28] So not only are they not living into what it is to be in a people of God. They are now taking a foreign deity and worshiping an idol. And what is the problem with idolatry?

In Psalm 135 verse 18 we read that those who make them, these little figurine false gods, shall be like them. So what's the problem?

Yes, idolatry is an abomination to the Lord. And I don't stress all of this, but the problem is that those who make these idols and those who have idolatry in your life, you become like them.

So the idol of lust, the idol of deception, the idol of selfishness. I think today we have an idolatry of political leanings and people feel passionate about them. They care more about that than the Lord Jesus Christ.

An idol of whatever. The problem with anyone who sins habitually by elevating a sinful desire or an attitude above the Lord is idolizing it.

[31 : 41] This sinful thought or behavior or idea. And it invites Satan's influence. Sadly, this last year let me illustrate it this way.

My wife and I know of a pastor friend who was in ministry for a few years and through a series of events, could not get a handle on the idolatry of lust.

And that took him far where I won't get into too many details, but he is now spending time in prison. And I think about this young man. He's a dear friend of mine.

And I think he did not think that entertaining this idea would cost him that deeply.

And that's the nature of idolatry. That you take in foreign gods, Israel, speaking of Israel, they take in foreign gods. They entertain this idea.

[32 : 53] Then they create a little figurine and now they're doing something and they're worshiping in some way, giving some acknowledgement to this idol now that sits in your home, this figurine.

But I think we do the same thing in our hearts today. We entertain a thought and we don't reject it. We don't confess it as sin and we entertain it a little further.

And then it becomes bigger in our life and it becomes harder to reject it. And then pretty soon we're spending an unusual amount of time entertaining it. And then it will lead us in places that we never thought we would be.

Isn't that true? We've all been there. And I think this is the caution for us here in this passage.

Those who make them become like them.

And so they have made these idols. And so then the Lord gives them the pronouncement of judgment in verse 27. And I will send you into exile beyond Damascus.

[33 : 59] So if you can imagine Israel, the geography of Israel in your mind, they're going to be taken north into Assyria by way of Damascus on that road.

And there's a highway, a roadway that goes that way. And he says, that's going to be your judgment. You'll be taken off to Assyria because you have not repented.

You haven't taken these things seriously. And there are ethical implications for being a people of God. And you've ignored them. The Lord does not threaten idly.

He declares that these things shall come to pass. And in case you're confused, who's speaking?

Look at the rest of verse 27 says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

That's who declares this judgment, Israel. So let me, so Amos now is finishing his message. This is the end of his third message. And he says, so here's my pronouncement again.

[35 : 03] You will be taken into captivity. Now he's being a little more clear by the way of the road to Damascus through that way. And he doesn't threaten idly.

It wasn't, it's less than about 20 years from this point that Israel was taken into captivity. So today the world in which we live has broken its creation covenant with God.

Idolatry of every kind is rife in our world today. The same Lord has promised to return. And the same Lord, there is a day of the Lord that is awaiting.

And let people, God's people consider. Let us live holiness, holy lives who are godly. There are ethical implications for being a people of God.

I want to just conclude with this verse. It's found in the New Testament in 1 Thessalonians. I've color coded it for a reason. Let's read it first and then I want to draw your attention to a few things.

[36 : 07] Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

But since we belong in to the day, let us be sober. Having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet of the hope of salvation.

For God has not destined us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him.

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing. There are many times in the New Testament that the day of the Lord is referenced.

Here's one of them. But notice I've put in red the day of the Lord because it is linked to the concept of wrath. For God has not destined us to wrath.

[37 : 10] So there is a day of the Lord that is coming and accompanying the day of the Lord is wrath. But there is a way of escape of this judgment of wrath because he says for God has not destined us to wrath.

But to obtain and here's the way of escape. Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him.

So whether we've died or we are alive when that day of the Lord occurs, we will live with him. And you can only escape wrath and live with him through salvation and our Lord Jesus Christ believing in his life, death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin.

If you have not believed that today I pray you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in his life and his work on the cross.

But then remember the theme of today. There are ethical implications for being a people of God.

And look with me in the yellow words. Let us be sober, put on the breastplate of faith and love, have a hope of salvation.

[38 : 21] We are to encourage one another and build each other up with these things. There's ethical implications for being a people of God. Israel had forgotten that and I pray we would never forget this.

Let us grow and increase in our love for the Lord. Let us grow and increase for our love for one another. And out of those two great commandments that were given in the New Testament, I pray we would embody them and grow in our understanding of them.

Love the Lord and love one another. There are ethical implications for being a people of God.

Would you pray with me? Father, thank you so much for this day. Thank you for the privilege of having an opportunity to worship you today.

What is hard for me to imagine, you not receiving worship or offerings or the purposes for which we gather today. So I pray with a pure heart.

I appreciate the time we had earlier in our service to spend time just to confess sin and be right with you and have an opportunity to restore fellowship with you before we continued in our worship.

[39 : 37] And I pray today as we consider our ways of what... that as we live this week, we would be cognizant of saying, does this activity, does my attitude, do my words reflect me being a people of God?

Does it reflect the Lord Jesus Christ? And if it doesn't, I pray that we would be quick to confess that we might live more pleasing in your sight.

Thank you Lord for this day. Thank you for the privilege to gather together. And Lord I pray, when the day of the Lord occurs, we would all be ready.

Thank you. Amen.