

# Amos 5:18-6:14 (PM)

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Each year my wife and I get to visit the classrooms of our kids. It's great. Get to see the room they learn in, spend some time with the teacher. Fantastic.

Now imagine if I walked into, say, my boys' elementary school class and I stood there at this after-school meeting and I looked around at all the artwork on the wall and I said, wow! I mean these pictures are truly terrible.

Like, this is just awful. You can't even understand what any of it is. Imagine if I said that. It's hard to get your head around saying, someone's saying something like that, right? Or imagine this. Imagine if you're an employee and you sneak a look at your confidential performance evaluation and you find one of the following things written about you.

And apparently these were taken from real performance evaluations. Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig. This young lady has delusions of adequacy.

[ 1 : 0 6 ] He sets low personal standards and consistently fails to achieve them. This man is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.

So look, these are some examples of some evaluations. They're unexpected. They're surprising. They're pretty harsh. Now imagine, this is the most unexpected evaluation and the harshest. Imagine if God said, imagine if God said, I hate your church.

I hate your church. Imagine that. I mean, that would be quite a thing, wouldn't it? Imagine you're in the middle of service like this and you take up the offering.

And you know, the minister normally prays for it, comes up. I think, prays for it. Just about to pray for it. Chris is just about to pray for it. And this big booming voice from heaven out of nowhere just says, keep your money.

I don't want it. Your attitudes are the worst. Imagine that. Imagine if these two come up here. Krista and Nathan Carter.

[ 2 : 0 7 ] Come up. They come. Krista's just about to do this. The hands are about to come down on the keyboard. And God speaks and says, no, no, no, no. I'm just, I'm not interested.

Let me remind you of verses 21 to 24 in our passage. This is from chapter 5. And it's probably good to have your Bibles open because I'm going to be dancing all around this. These two chapters. This is the Lord speaking. And he says, I hate. I despise your feasts. I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them.

And the peace offerings of your fatted animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs. The melody of your harps. I will not.

Listen, that's God speaking. Imagine that. It's shocking, isn't it? So what is going on in this passage in Amos?

[ 3 : 0 8 ] Well, first, can I just remind you, this is not an angry rant. God hasn't lost his temper. This is God who is a roaring lion. Because he's looking at his people.

And he sees religious pretense and hypocrisy. And he roars because he loves. And he doesn't want us to live like that. Now, if you're visiting with us this morning, let me give you the very big picture here for a moment.

We are working our way through this Old Testament book called Amos. It was written about 700 years before Christ. It's about a guy called Amos who was a shepherd living in the southern kingdom.

And God calls him up to the northern kingdom to Israel to speak to his people. A people who are in a great place materially. But a terrible place spiritually.

And so Amos makes a series of speeches. And in our section, he says, you guys have become proud and indifferent and complacent amongst other things.

[ 4 : 14 ] But it's not like they'd stopped going to church. No, they actually put on these amazing, elaborate and expensive church services. But the issue was, nothing changes in them as a result.

They walk in proud and indifferent and complacent. And they walk out exactly the same. See, this is why God says, I will not listen. After God says, I will not listen to your hymns.

He says in chapter 5, verse 24. But let justice roll and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

What does that mean? It's like, despite being really committed to these religious practices, nothing flowed out of them, people, afterwards.

They didn't leave church with a greater desire to live justly or more sacrificially. Their religion made no difference in their life.

And now to be clear, it's not like God hates religious services. Not at all. But he hates hypocrisy and pretense. See, these folks, they claimed to believe one thing by participating.

[ 5 : 19 ] But in practice, they lived for themselves. Mostly, they kind of just wanted a really comfortable life. Okay, so that's the really big picture. Let's dig into some details.

Let's get a bit more specific. Do you remember a few chapters ago when Amos had this great line? He said, you cows of Bashan. Do you guys remember this line? It was a great line.

This was Amos calling out the lazy, drunk, overbearing, upper-class woman of Samaria. Well, at the time, I said, Amos is not just particularly picking on women here.

Surely, he's going to get stuck into the men. And here it is. We're in chapter 6, verse 1. Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria.

See, these men, they think they're doing really well because they live in a rich country. They go to a rich church. They are personally prosperous. Life is easy. They feel pretty secure. What could go wrong? In fact, their arrogance extends to the fact that they feel so secure, they think if God visited us today, he would be pretty impressed because we are killing it.

[ 6 : 29 ] Like, we are killing it in every area of life. And God directly addresses this in chapter 5, verse 18, when he says, Amos is saying here, you think if God came to see you and appraised your life, he'd be really impressed.

Well, it would not go well for them, the Lord says. For those, you know, younger folks, it's like being really excited to go to your prize giving, your end of year prize giving at school, thinking you're going to get a special award, and actually you're going to get expelled.

These folks have a really wrong-headed sense of confidence. They have a false sense of security. They think they are totally good with God, and they're not. They've placed their security in the fact that life is good, and not the fact that God is good.

That's one of their problems. And they have a lot of problems. Let's look at another one. Chapter 6, verses 4 to 6. It's a picture of how these people spend their days.

And you can see they spend their days on ivory beds and eating fine meats and listening to vacuous music and pampering themselves with perfume and essential oils and drinking wine. And they're drinking wine not by the glass, not by the bottle, but by the bowl.

[ 8 : 05 ] I didn't even know that was an option, you know, like, to buy a bowl of wine. Imagine that.

Now, what's the problem? What's exactly the problem with this? Is it that God hates success or wealth or music? No. The problem is what that success did to them.

God doesn't say, I hate the fact that you're rich or I hate the fact that you're prosperous. In chapter 6, verse 8, he says, I hate the fact that you've become prideful as a result. Verse 8, I abhor the pride of Jacob.

God doesn't say, I hate that you have nice things. No, he says, you're so comfortable, you've stopped caring about the things that really matter in life.

And the passage gives us a few examples of the things they've stopped thinking about. Chapter 6, verse 3, O you who put far away the day of disaster, they're so busy focusing on comfort and trivializing their life away, they just push aside any unpleasant thoughts.

[ 9 : 13 ] Thoughts like, I am answerable to God. There's no room for such ideas because it's unpleasant and they're focused on comfort.

And when you stop thinking you're accountable to God, you can get really spiritually wacky. Chapter 5, verse 26, you can see behind me there, they start taken up with a star God.

The other example of what their life of comfort has done to them is found in verse 12 of chapter 6. You've turned justice into poison. What does that mean? I think that's what it's trying to say here is that when life is good, wow.

I mean, you don't really want to think about people whose lives are not good. It's just unpleasant. It's not nice. I mean, who cares about justice when you're kind of winning at life, you know?

I think that's what that's trying to communicate. Now, the great shock of the passage is that God is going to take away all these comforts from them. Chapter 6, verse 11, God says, your great houses that you spend your days lounging in, they're going to be destroyed.

[10:25] For behold, the Lord commands the great house shall be strapped down into fragments and the little house into bits. And again, it's not like God hates nice homes.

I just redid my living room. Like it's new paint, new plants, beautiful new couch, new art on the walls. It looks amazing. I love it. God doesn't hate nice homes, but he hates what nice homes can do to our hearts sometimes. It can make us inwardly focused.

It can make us just a bit too impressed with ourselves. All right, so how do we summarize all of this? Here we go. God has been incredibly good to Israel, but that success had led to a worldliness that was killing their faith.

They had become complacent and proud and uncaring and their religious practices were just pretentious, hypocritical. They didn't have the inward faith to cope with the outward success.

[11:36] There we go. There's your summary line of the whole thing. They didn't have the inward faith to cope with all that outward success. You know, if you do well in life, you need that inward Holy Spirit conviction that this is all temporary.

And it doesn't define you. They didn't have it. And it poisoned their souls. And it seems that they had no idea that the poison had taken hold because they're thinking, I wish God would come now and appraise us because it's going to go really well.

That's how deceived they were. You know, one of the most dangerous situations a church can be in is when a church is in crisis and it doesn't know it's in crisis.

It doesn't know it's in crisis because the offerings are coming in and the attendance is pretty good. You know, a church can spiritually drift and the people haven't even noticed. That's one of the worst things that can happen to a church.

And it happened to Israel here. So God roars like a lion at their complacency, at their self-centeredness, at their lack of concern for others, at their idolatry, at their religious hypocrisy and promises to visit them in verse 14.

[12:50] For behold, I will raise up against you a nation. O house of Israel declares the Lord, the God of hosts, which as I mentioned last week, that means the God of armies.

It's not a sort of, it's not a nice way of describing God. And again, this is not God losing his temper. This is God who wants his people back, who lovingly and relentlessly pursues his people.

God is not heartless. He loves them, but they are hurting themselves and they are dishonoring him. So God says, woe to you. And every parent knows this. Every parent knows what it is to warn and love at the same time.

And this is what is happening in Amos 5 and 6. And before I finish, I want to do two things really quickly. Firstly, I want you to know that I know this is a hard book to hear.

It has been a hard book to study for me. But first, I want you to know that this is not out of step with the teachings of Jesus. Perhaps later this week, you'd look at Luke chapter 6.

[13:52] Jesus echoing Amos. He has a series of woe to you statements. He says, woe to the rich who are full and satisfied and trivialize their life away. In that chapter, it's the same message. Perhaps Matthew 23, when Jesus says, woe to you hypocrites.

And he's speaking to the very religious who are just full of pride. Amos and Jesus, they're on the same page. The second thing I want to do is I want to ask the question, is Amos 6 a mirror that we need to look into?

This is a hard question, but it's the right question. Is Amos chapter 6 a mirror we need to look into? Any of us with an ounce of self-awareness will know we are all hypocrites to some degree.

You know, so we shouldn't walk in here pretending we've got it all together. No, of course not. We come here grateful that God has provided Jesus for our forgiveness and the Holy Spirit to help us be more consistent in our living.

But today, is God speaking specifically to me, to you, to us, perhaps about pride or complacency or a life focused just on comfort? Is He calling you away from something that is poisoning you spiritually?

[ 15 : 10 ] Folks, today, tonight, this week, would you consider that in your prayers and bring it to Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you?

Amen. Amen. Amen.