

The Books of Hosea, Joel, and Amos

Lesson 10: Seek the Lord and Live -- Amos 5:1-27

Imagine standing in a crowded room while someone you love is still very much alive, healthy, laughing across the table, and yet a voice begins to sing their funeral song. That is what Amos does in chapter five. Israel is prosperous. The markets are busy, the festivals are full, the singing is loud, and the offerings are stacked high on the altars. By every outward measure the nation is thriving. And into that confidence the prophet lifts up a lament, a dirge, the kind of mournful song you would only ever sing at a graveside. 'The virgin of Israel is fallen,' he chants, 'she shall no more rise.' He is weeping over a corpse that is still walking around. He sees what they cannot see. The end has already begun, and the only ones who do not know it are the people themselves.

But this is not a chapter without hope, and that is the wonder of it. Right in the middle of the funeral song, God Himself breaks in with an invitation so tender it nearly takes your breath away. 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live.' Three times in this chapter He repeats it, like a hand reaching down into a pit. Seek the Lord, and live. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live. There is still time. The grave is not yet sealed. Heaven is not yet closed. The God who weeps over their death is at the very same moment holding open the door to life, and all He asks is that they turn around and come to Him while they still can.

Then comes the part that stings, because it lands so close to home. These people were not irreligious. They worshiped. They kept the feast days. They brought their burnt offerings and their fat beasts and they sang their songs with instruments. And God says something we are not ready to hear. 'I hate, I despise your feast days. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs.' How can the God who commanded worship reject worship? Because somewhere along the way they had torn apart two things God had joined together. They worshiped Him on the Sabbath and robbed the poor on Monday. They sang to heaven while they trampled the needy at the gate. And God will not be flattered by music from hands that are crushing His children.

What He wants instead is one of the most famous sentences in all the prophets, and it pours out like a river. 'Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.' Not a trickle of token charity. Not a seasonal flood that comes and goes. A current that never stops, justice and righteousness flowing through every part of life, through the courtroom and the marketplace and the home and the heart. As we walk through Amos 5 together, the question pressing on every one of us is not whether we worship, but whether the God we worship can find His own justice and mercy running through the rest of our week. Seek the Lord, and live.

Group Discussion: Amos pictures justice and righteousness as a river that never runs dry, yet warns that worship can become noise God refuses to hear. Where do you see the temptation, in our own lives and in the Lord's church, to keep the singing and the assembly going strong while

letting justice and mercy toward people dry up to a trickle, and what would it look like for that river to flow again?

Personal Reflection: Amos says three times, 'Seek the Lord, and ye shall live.' Be honest with yourself about one area where you have been seeking something else, comfort, approval, security, success, as though it could give you life. What would it mean this week to turn from that and genuinely seek the Lord instead?

Read Amos 5:1-27

Study Questions

1. Read Amos 5:1-3. Amos lifts up a 'lamentation,' a funeral dirge, over Israel while the nation is still standing and prosperous. What does it tell us about God's view of sin that He mourns the coming death of a people who feel perfectly secure, and how does this differ from the way the nation saw itself?
2. When have you felt secure and successful in some area of life, only to realize later that something was already dying beneath the surface? How does Amos's funeral song over a living nation challenge you to let God show you the true condition of your own heart?
3. Read Amos 5:4-6 and 5:14-15. Three times God pleads, 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live,' and pairs it with 'seek good, and not evil.' According to these verses, what does it actually mean to 'seek the Lord,' and how does genuine seeking show itself in how a person lives, not merely in religious activity?
4. Where in your own life is the Lord inviting you, right now, to 'seek good, and not evil, that ye may live'? Name one specific habit, attitude, or relationship where you sense Him calling you to turn and choose good.

5. Read Amos 5:7–13. God indicts Israel for turning ‘judgment to wormwood’ and treading down the poor, for taking bribes and turning aside the needy at the gate. Amos then lifts up the God who made the stars and turns night into morning (5:8). Why does the prophet anchor his call for justice in the truth that this is the Creator of heaven and earth speaking?
6. Amos says that in such a corrupt time ‘the prudent shall keep silence’ (5:13). Have you ever stayed silent when you should have spoken up for what is right, or spoken up when staying quiet would have been easier? What does the fear of God, rather than the fear of people, do to that struggle?
7. Read Amos 5:18–20. The people longed for ‘the day of the Lord,’ assuming it would be light for them, but God warns it will be ‘darkness, and not light.’ Why were they so confident that God’s day would vindicate them, and what dangerous assumption about their standing with God does this expose? How does this warn us against presuming on grace?
8. Is there any place where you have quietly assumed that you are ‘fine’ with God, that the day of judgment holds no real concern for you, simply because you are religious or have always been part of the church? How does Amos’s warning press you to examine that confidence honestly?
9. Read Amos 5:21–27. God says He hates and despises their feast days, will not accept their offerings, and will not hear their songs, then cries, ‘Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream’ (5:24). Why does God reject worship offered by people who trample the poor and pervert justice? What does this teach us about the inseparable bond between true worship of God and justice toward our neighbor, and how does our worship today, when offered with hearts that love mercy and live righteously, become

acceptable to God through Jesus Christ? (See Acts 7:42–43; John 4:23–24; James 1:27; Micah 6:8.)

10. Looking back across the whole chapter, the funeral song, the threefold 'seek me and live,' and the river of justice that God longs to see, name one specific way Jesus is forming you through Amos 5. Where is He joining together in you what Israel tore apart, so that your worship and your daily justice and mercy flow from the same heart?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Micah 6:6–8, the parallel call to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly rather than multiply sacrifices; Isaiah 1:11–17, God weary of empty offerings while hands are full of blood, calling Israel to relieve the oppressed; Acts 7:42–43, Stephen quotes Amos 5:25–27 against a people who honored the temple yet resisted the Spirit; John 4:23–24, true worshipers worship in spirit and in truth; James 1:27, pure religion before God is to visit the fatherless and widows and keep oneself unspotted

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