



Week 3: “Amos: Responsibility and (Social) Justice” (Amos 5:4-15)

Leaning into **LENT**

Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Amos 5:4-15 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. What do you think of when you hear the term “social justice”? Do you think more about the things you must do or about how you should be as one being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ?
2. During the time of Amos, it was clear that as a society they were not being a light to the nations. Amos excoriates the people for their unfaithfulness to God and their lack of justice exhibited to those on the margins of their society. What would Amos say to God’s people today?

Digging Deeper

1. Read Amos 1:3-2:8. What is the difference between how God deals with the neighbouring nations versus Judah and Israel? How does this illustrate what Jesus says in Luke 12:48?
2. Amos condemned God’s people for a lack of justice and righteousness (read 5:7, 10, 14-15, 24). How can you live your life characterized by justice and righteousness towards all people, particularly the poor and marginalized? How can we advocate for justice (and mercy) for the poor and marginalized?
3. Pastor Tyler noted three reasons that caused the lack of justice and righteousness in Israel: a theology that saw themselves as entitled to God’s blessing (6:1; 9:7), a worship that was irrelevant or indifferent to what Yahweh truly requires of his people (4:4-5; 5:21-23; see also Micah 6:8), and a lifestyle indifferent to the needs of the poor and marginalised (3:10; 4:1; 6:4-6). Do you see any of these things in the life of the church today? How can we ensure that we stay faithful to our covenant relationship with God?
4. The reality of the gospel is that there is no one who is righteous and no one who truly executes justice — no one except for God’s Son, Jesus. What difference does it make for you to know that in Jesus we see the true justice and righteousness of God (Rom 3:21-22), our righteousness can be restored and renewed (2Cor 5:21), and our relationships with each other can be characterized by justice and righteousness as we are transformed into the likeness of Christ (Eph 4:24)?
5. Pastor Tyler talked about how the picture of Yahweh roaring like the lion of Judah in Amos 1:2 needs to be read in light of the picture of the Lamb that was slain in Revelation 5:5-6. Read Amos 9:11-15. When considering the harsh message of judgement of the prophetic books (including Amos), how does God’s grace and mercy reveal itself in this passage?

Living it Out

1. It is far easier to point out flaws and sins in the lives of other people than to recognize them in our own lives (see Matt 7:3-5). Spend some time this week in prayer asking God to show where we need to grow in justice and righteousness and how we may be more merciful in our judgments of others.
2. Think about some ways you can stay more informed about social justice issues today and perhaps make a difference in your community.

Amos: Responsibility and (Social) Justice

Amos 5:4-7, 10-15

March 23, 2025
Pastor Tyler Williams
Greenfield Community Church

Leaning into LENT

The Minor Prophets

Event	Super Power	Prophets
Fall of Israel (722 BC)	Assyria	Hosea, Amos , Micah
Exile of Judah (587 BC)	Babylonia	Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakuk, Obadiah
Return (538 BC)	Persia	Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi Joel* and Jonah*

The Book of Amos

“The words of Amos, one of the *sheep breeders* of Tekoa [see 7:14]—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel” (1:1).

- A southern prophet sent to the Northern kingdom.
- Ministered between 760-750 BC – a time of peace and prosperity – but also economic disparity and injustice (see 2Kings 14:23-25; 2Chron 26).

The Message of Amos

“Yahweh roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Mt. Carmel withers” (1:2).



- How humans are treating one another (1:3-2:3).
- How God’s own people are treating one another – especially the poor and marginalized (2:3-9:15).

The Crimes of the Nations

Rhetorical condemnation of each nation:

1. **Intro:** “Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of _____, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment” (NRSVue).
2. **Citation of crime:** “because they _____.”
3. **Pronouncement of punishment:** “So I will send a fire on _____.”

The Crimes of the Nations

- Damascus (1:3-5)
- Gaza (1:6-8)
- Tyre (1:9-10)
- Edom (1:11-12)
- Ammon (1:13-15)
- Moab (2:1-3)



The Crimes of God's People

Southern Kingdom of Judah (2:4-5)

- Failure to keep covenant and idolatry

Northern Kingdom of Israel (2:6-16)

- Selling the righteous and needy for money (2:6)
- Denying justice to the poor and oppressed (2:7a)
- Perverse abuse of women (2:7b)
- Exploitation of the poor—even by the religious (2:8)

Rhetoric of entrapment (cf. 2Sam 12)

The Roots of the Problem

At the centre of the book, Amos identifies the *roots* of the problem:

- “There are those who turn *justice* into bitterness and cast *righteousness* to the ground... There are those who hate the one who upholds *justice* in court and detest the one who tells the truth” (5:7, 10).



The Roots of the Problem

- “Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then Yahweh God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain **justice** in the courts. Perhaps Yahweh God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph” (5:14-15).



The Roots of the Problem

No Justice (*mishpat* משפט).

- Includes social, ethical, and religious justice; as well as legal justice (e.g., Exod 22:25-26; 23:8).
- Justice was to characterize their life together; they were to “maintain justice in the gates” (5:15).
- The rights due to **every** individual in the community (including the poor and vulnerable), and the upholding of those rights.



The Roots of the Problem

No Righteousness (*tsedekah* צדקה).

- Refers to the attitude and ability that produces the just deed.
- A person who consistently acts with justice (*mishpat*) is called righteous (*tsedik*) (Ezek 18:5-9).
- At its core, it means someone who lives in right covenant relationship with God and others.



The Roots of the Problem

“The qualities — justice and righteousness — are rooted in the character of God who has acted in justice and righteousness toward the people. God then expects these qualities to be reflected in the life of God’s people, in their relationship to one another and to God... [These are] the moral qualities which are to characterize covenant obedience” (Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 260).



The Cause of the Problem

Entitled Theology

- “Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria...” (6:1).
- “Are not you and the Cushites all the same to me, children of Israel? — declares Yahweh. Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt and the Philistines from Captor, and the Arameans from Kir? (9:7; cf. 3:2).



The Cause of the Problem

Irrelevant Worship

- “Go to Bethel, and transgress, go to Gilgal and transgress yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years!... *for this is what you love to do*” (4:4-5).
- “I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me... Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps” (5:21-23).



The Cause of the Problem

Indifferent Lifestyle

- “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, ‘Bring us some drinks!’” (4:1).
- “You lie on beds adorned with ivory and lounge on your couches.... You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph” (6:4-6; cf. 3:10).



Hope for Justice

There is not much hope in the book of Amos, but what there is, it is a hope for justice & righteousness:

- “But let **justice** roll down like water, and **righteousness** like an overflowing stream” (5:24).
- Hope for a future Davidic ruler who will “restore David’s fallen tent” and establish justice (9:11).



Hope for Grace

It is good to recognize that in light of the overwhelming judgement that so characterizes Amos' prophecies,

- That the Lion that roars in judgement in Amos 1:2,
- Is the worthy Lamb that was slain in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah (Rev 5:5-6).



Invitation

It is in Jesus the Messiah...

- We see the true justice and righteousness of God.
- Our righteousness can be restored and renewed.
- Our relationships with each other can be characterized by justice, compassion, and mercy.