

Amos 5 – Seek the Lord, and Live.

People of God, John Calvin was right when he said the Human Heart is an Idol Factory. When Amos prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II, around the year 760 BC, there was a great accumulation of wealth for the rich, the military was as strong as ever, the borders were secure, and the people were very religious. Jeroboam truly was Making Israel Great Again. And so, there was much for Israelites to falsely place their hope and trust in.

And so it was Amos' task as Prophet to make Israel see that their idolatry would lead them into captivity. Those things they placed their trust in would not save them from the coming Assyrian Invasion.

By exposing that those very things they put their trust in to protect them and make them great – their wealth, their military, and their false religion, Amos shows how it will all amount to nothing when God passes through the land to destroy them.

What they needed to do, was to seek the Lord and live according to His word. They needed to return to the one true God, and they needed to establish true justice and righteousness in the land, they needed to turn away from syncretistic state religion, and then maybe, maybe God would be gracious to them.

Amos chp. 5. Begins this way:

5 Hear this word which I take up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel:

Amos begins chapter 5 singing a funeral dirge. Israel is as good as dead. Her sins and idolatry and injustice have brought her to such a place that Amos can say RIP Israel. The rot is so bad, the moral corruption so thorough, there is nothing that can be said of her but that she is dead. So he sings a funeral song for Israel.

Hence he says,

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*² The virgin of Israel has fallen;
She will rise no more.
She lies forsaken on her land;
There is no one to raise her up.*

He calls Israel a Virgin for three reasons. First because, up to this time she had not been taken over militarily. She had been unconquered, and so she had not been raped and abused by other nations. She was like a virgin in this regard. And under Jeroboam their military strength was increased greatly.

Secondly, Israel lived luxuriously, and took every delight to live in rich and wealth and extravagance. Israel is like a pampered virgin daughter of the rich and powerful. Riches which she has accumulated for herself through bribes and injustice.

And thirdly, Amos is also be speaking about Israel in terms of endearment as God wished to see her, but which she was clearly not. God wanted her to be virgin-like in purity toward Him alone. But she instead played the whore ever since Jeroboam the son of Nebat was king. Which I will explain in a moment.

³ For thus says the Lord GOD:

*"The city that goes out by a thousand
Shall have a hundred left,
And that which goes out by a hundred
Shall have ten left to the house of Israel."*

Judgment is coming. 90% of her people will be killed and taken away. Out of a thousand only a hundred will be left. Out of a hundred, only ten will be left. God will preserve a very few, a small remnant.

⁴ For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:

*"Seek Me and live;
⁵ But do not seek Bethel,
Nor enter Gilgal,*

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*Nor pass over to Beersheba;
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,
And Bethel shall come to nothing.*

*⁶ Seek the LORD and live,
Lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph,
And devour it,
With no one to quench it in Bethel—*

Amos says they are to seek God and live. But do not seek Bethel. Nor Gilgal, or cross over to Beersheba.

Bethel was the center of the idolatrous syncretistic cult that Jeroboam the son of Nebat established. During the reign of Jeroboam I, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah split. Jeroboam didn't want the people in Israel to cross the boarder into Judah to go to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem to worship there. So he made up a new religion with similar forms of worship like in Judah, but with different content.

Jeroboam made 2 golden calves and set them up on altars: One in Bethel and the other as far north as Dan. And he said, *these are your god's O Israel who brought you up out of the land of Egypt*. And he ordained new priests, not from the tribe of Levi, he made up his own church calendar with his own holy days. He made up a completely different religion in content, but one which in many other ways looked liked the religious worship going on in Jerusalem. And God absolutely hated it.

In fact, every king of Israel since Jeroboam I has been described in this way, *King so and so did what was evil in the sight of the LORD because he followed in the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat in which he made Israel to sin*. It was the chief sin in Israel. Israel even went further in her spiritual whoredom by worshiping the Baal's and the Asherahs' under Ahab and Jezebel. And now under the reign of Jeroboam II, Israel's syncretistic false idolatry had increased even more. And so, Virgin Israel, she was not. She was about to be destroyed. Bethel was about to go into captivity.

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Much like today the people of America have a concept of God that is very different from the God of Scripture. We have *In God We Trust* printed on our money. We *are One nation under God*. And we say *God bless America*. God is still very much in our cultural and societal life. But this god is very different from the One True God revealed to us in Scripture and in Jesus Christ.

Many people today who talk about God think God is just some big cosmic marshmallow. He exists to give you all the wonderful things you want and tell you how great you are, and he blows kisses to everyone. (sarcasm) *God would never dream of doing something that would offend the sensibilities of people. God would never be so offensive as to say Thou Shalt Not. God would never disapprove of anything we did. God would never violate our standards of justice and righteousness.*

We have a god created in our own image. He looks and acts exactly like we do. Jesus wears Red, White, and Blue. Jesus is like Buddah or a Guru. Jesus is a liberal vaccinator. Jesus is a political revolutionary. Jesus is whatever we make him out to be. This is what is represented to us at Bethel.

We are so out of touch with who God really is, because we have blended the true Christian faith revealed in the Bible with other weird unbiblical content, that we have no idea who God is any more, nor how we should worship him.

So Amos is saying do not put your trust in some false syncretistic idea of god. Some vague general quasi-Christian view of God, the marshmallow sweet God of Americanity, or the new god of Covid. He cannot save you.

We must make a hard break with all forms of national idolatry and compromise and syncretism, and worship the One True Lord and serve him, and then only we will live.

But if we don't, then Bethel will go into captivity. All those cities that cave, and embrace woke non-sense, and vaccine mandates to worship, all those churches which represent the false worship of Israelite civic religion, or Americanity, will be destroyed within a generation.

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Because when God kindles his fire, it is too late. When the Author and source of life becomes the author and source of your destruction, you have no hope. You can't flee from him. So its best to repent and to seek God, and hope he spares you.

Not only is God upset about the false impure syncretistic religion that Israel was offering, but he was also upset about the rampant injustice and unrighteousness that established in the land. And so he says,

*⁷ You who turn justice to wormwood,
And lay righteousness to rest in the earth!"*

Wormwood is a plant that has an extremely bitter taste to it. And Israel's justice system was not sweet and fair and according to the standards of righteousness that God intended. But it had become bitterness and wormwood. It wasn't Justice, it was Just-us. It was the rich against the poor, and the way things happened in Israel was through bribes.

As we see in v. 11, Amos says the judges in the gate *trample on the poor and exact taxes of grain from him*, and by getting rich through exploitation and oppression of the poor, they were able to buy *houses of stone and pleasant vineyards*. In 3:15 God says,

I will strike down the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end.

The rich were so rich they had ivory houses and winter and summer houses.

But it is not like they got rich through hard work and honest labor. It was expressly through the exploitation and oppression of the poor, and through giving smaller measures and increasing the prices for less product.

Now this exploitation of the poor by the rich rulers in the gate was not just for their own sake, but it was at the behest of their wives. So that Amos attributes the oppression of the poor and the crushing of the needy to the wives. The women had become so pampered and fattened from the riches of injustice that Amos likens them to the cows of Bashan.

He says in 4:1 –

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*Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria,
Who oppress the poor,
Who crush the needy,
Who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!"*

The unscrupulous behavior of the men in their business and political affairs was significantly influenced by the ambition and greed of their wives.

And today, many power hungry women wield political power to make themselves rich and powerful. I remember watching the video exposing Planned Parenthood was selling aborted baby parts, and that one woman talking about buying a new Lamborghini with the money she made.

And so much injustice and exploitation of the poor is at the hands and behest of evil women in our society.

And so God says in Amos 5:12-

"For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are our sins – you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate."

Much like in our own governmental system, where career politicians do not pass laws for the sake of justice, and for the cause of righteousness. They get kick backs from lobbyists in order to advance some agenda that enriches the rich even more and destroys the poor small business owner.

Or when a Judge in Philadelphia was sending kids to jail for the most insignificant crimes, because he was getting paid by a private prison to help them fill their jail.

Injustice was rampant in Israel, and it made the rich richer, and poor poorer. And God absolutely hates injustice like this.

Now we see injustice like this in America, but we also other kinds of injustice, so that murderers are allowed to go free, and where the verdict of certain cases are already predetermined because it has to do with race, rather than evidence and doing what is right.

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Every society's laws are based upon the god of that society. The source of every law code and the manner in which justice is administered to the people is a direct reflection of who that society's god is.

When the standards of your laws and the way in which you administer justice in the land is a reflection of the false god of your own creation - Mammon, ideology, pleasure, power - then the justice that comes from that god, and which is found in those courts is full of bitterness.

There is no such thing as sweet justice in an idolatrous nation. In a society that is corrupted by greed, and narcissism, and wicked race bating ideology, justice is achieved by bribes or by brute force and threats of violence, justice is transformed into bitter calamity. That was Israel, and that is America.

Righteousness, true righteousness, God's standard of what is good and right in the world, is laid to rest in the earth. RIP righteousness. It is thrown down into the grave with Israel herself.

So Israel perverted the standards of God's justice, because they forgot or ignored who the true God is. Who is God?

*⁸He made the Pleiades and Orion;
He turns the shadow of death into morning
And makes the day dark as night;
He calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the face of the earth;
YHWH is His name.*

*⁹He rains ruin upon the strong,
So that fury comes upon the fortress.*

Remember, to Israel, and to America, God is a cosmic marshmallow and an eternal panzy, a big giant fountain of blessing and approval and who wants nothing more for you than that you to live your best life now, which of course means you live in luxury and with no sickness or pain, and most of all, now today, that you remain safe.

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God has become a big safety inspector, and the Bible has become nothing more than another MSDS, Material Safety Data Sheets. God cares about what makes you safe and happy. God is your face mask. God is your vaccine. God is your social distance. God is the CDC. God is the President's Mandates. God is whatever makes you feel safe.

But this is a false god, obviously. The One True God, like Aslan, is not safe. But He is good. And that is why he rains ruin upon the strong, and sends fury upon our self made fortresses of safety. Everything we put our trust in to keep us safe - the stock market, govt mandates, vaccines, face masks, our bugout bags, our guns and ammo, our survival skills, our wealth, our politics – None of that matters to YHWH. He made the constellations, he makes the sun rise and set, and he sent the flood, and he brings ruin upon empires the world over from the beginning of the world, to the end. If you put your trust in anything else beside the One True God of Scripture, and refuse to live in obedience to His word and ways, and base your future upon anything else other than the worship of God and Obedience to Him, you will be destroyed.

Because this is who God is. He is not just the God of blessing, He is the God of curses and judgment as well. This is the nature of the covenant. For example, in baptism, God promises to wash away our sins. And that is great, and true. But if we are unfaithful to the responsibilities of the covenant confirmed to us in baptism, then baptism becomes to us a symbol of our destruction. God destroyed the world in the flood. And he destroyed Pharaoh and his chariots in the Red Sea. Both which prefigure baptism.

People want a god they can manipulate and who only gives them blessing upon blessing. Like a magic genie. But YHWH is the Covenant God, who promises blessings, for obedience and faithfulness. But He also promises curses for disobedience and faithlessness. People don't like to hear about that part of the covenant. And so v. 10 says

*¹⁰ They hate the one who rebukes in the gate,
And they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.*

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The one who dares speak the truth about God's covenant and law, and his demands upon His covenant people, people who are in rebellion to God do not want to hear it. They abhor the one who speaks uprightly. The one who speaks straightforward and tells the truth, and tells it how it is... *That person is mean, and they don't have the spirit of Jesus.*

Jesus, like his father, remember, is only ever nice and winsome and nuanced. Jesus never called people names. Jesus never prophesied doom upon people. Jesus never called out people for their hypocrisy. Right?

Again, because we have been brainwashed by syncretism, and we have essentially been worshiping ourselves, rather than the One True God, we have a selective view of Jesus that we have construed in our own image, so that we can ease our consciences by telling ourselves that Jesus approves of our decisions that we have made, even though if we actually examined the scriptures we would see we are in sin and disobedience.

And so, those who point out that God's people should abstain from certain behaviors, they are troublers of Israel. Like the prophets, people abhor those who reprove in the gates because their consciences are pricked, and they don't like to think that for one moment that they could possibly be doing something that God does not approve of.

Too many Christians think that their relationship with God is about the good feelings they have. And as long as they feel good then God must approve of them. But that is not true. And we must never think that because we like some idea that we think sounds godly, that God in fact approves of it. We must be people who seek the truth of God, and speak the truth of God. And speak it in a straight forward manner. Even if other Christians hate us for it. But this is the danger that comes with such words.

And so, Amos says,

*V. ¹³ Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time,
For it is an evil time.*

Amos is saying that the times are so evil, that people refuse to hear the truth, and if he had any sense at all, he would just be silent. Don't waste

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your breath. Don't cast your pearls before swine. It is an evil time and nobody is going to receive your words of reproof with gladness. You are only going to get in trouble. You are going to be censored, you are going to be slandered, you are going to be cancelled and you will in trouble, even with your fellow Christians, and especially with the govt. If you had any sense at all, you would just keep your mouth shut. You need to be more nuanced. In fact, just keep quiet altogether.

And yet, Amos can't keep quiet. He continues on, like a fool, and says -

*¹⁴ Seek good and not evil,
That you may live;
So the LORD God of hosts will be with you,
As you have spoken.*

*¹⁵ Hate evil, love good;
Establish justice in the gate.*

People of God, Amos says, two times already, Seek God, and you will live. And now he says, seek the good, and you will live. And he says, Establish Justice in the gate. God and the good and justice, are all synonymous here. Before I talk about how I think we can begin to apply that to ourselves, let me tell you how we do not apply it .

God says we must love the good, and we must hate evil. The world today tries to guilt trip us into thinking that hatred for anything is unchristian. Jesus never hated anyone, we are told. Jesus was tolerant and loving and he accepted everyone and gave approval to everyone's lifestyle, we are told. He ate with tax collectors and sinners, and so that must mean he approved of their sin.

But do not be guilt tripped by people who hate God and hate Christ and who hate righteousness and who hate the good and who love the evil to tell you that hating evil is unchristian. God says to love the good and to hate the evil.

But that doesn't mean that you are righteous just because you hate the evil. You are not justified through virtue signalling, by merely proclaiming your

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hatred for the wicked and the evil. That doesn't make you righteous. By blasting liberals all day earns you nothing with God. Despising the communists means nothing.

We are not to become a conservative woke party, who think that because we hate those things that the left loves, that that somehow makes us righteous. It doesn't. We must love the good, and **do it**. We must establish justice in the gate. We must seek to implement and obey the commands of God in our lives. We must hate the evil, by loving the good enough to do it. The future belongs to those who put their faith into practice. And hating the evil is not a substitute for loving and doing the good.

So how can we establish justice in the gates? Well, here are a few thoughts, and I put them out to you to try and implement.

First is, if we are experiencing injustice in in the medical world, we ought to start our own Health Clinic. There are plenty of you that are in the health care field, that that might be possible.

Also, because supply lines are collapsing, it might become increasingly difficult to get food, so we need to establish a system where can buy and sell and trade or barter in case we do not have access to food on the shelves of the grocery store.

Along with that, we should probably figure out how to establish an alternative business and economic and banking system, in case it becomes required to show proof of vaccination to buy or sell.

We need to learn trades and skills that will be helpful to quite literally build the future, and to help us learn how to do things like make our own clothes, if needed, build a house, plant gardens. I know many of you are already doing these things. But we need to be having more conversations to help pass on this practical knowledge to one another.

During the collapse of the Roman Empire, Roman judges were so corrupt that it was common for Christian Priests and Bishops to go about the land wearing the black judges robes and adjudicate cases for people. The Church had become known for being just and wise, so that the pagans

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came to the Christians looking for justice. Since we are going to judge angels, perhaps we ought to know establish our own justice system.

Basically, the world is increasingly and very quickly, trying to push us out of participating in it. And that is a blessing in disguise. If God is going to smash those who place all their trust in a system that hates God, then perhaps we ought to find ways to build an alternative and better system that glorifies God and is based upon justice and righteousness and the good.

And if we do this,

*It may be that the LORD God of hosts
Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

And it may be the God will be gracious. God could wipe out 90% of Israel, but he is leaving a remnant. And that is gracious of God.

God is under constraints or obligations to save anyone. It may be that God will relent. Who knows, maybe God will grant us repentance and maybe he will be merciful to us. Maybe. But God is under no obligation to be gracious. Once we have broken the covenant and have sinned with such exceeding wickedness that we have provoked God to wrath, God may just as well be determined to smash us. That is God's prerogative. And we must never forget that. But God may be gracious and grant us life if we seek him with our whole heart, and seek the good and establish justice and righteousness. Amen.