

Amos

Introduction

Introduction to Amos: 1:1:

Amos is a shepherd from Tekoa (just south of Jerusalem), writing to the northern kingdom of Israel 50 years before the Assyrian invasion

The Passage

God's judgment on the nations: 1:2-2:5

- A. God is roaring like an angry lion: 1:2
- B. Pronounces judgment on the nations surrounding Israel
 - 1. "For three transgressions and for four . . ."
 - 2. "Therefore, I will send fire"

God's judgment on Israel: 2:6-16

I. God's covenant commands protecting the poor and needy

Exodus 23:6-8: Justice in the court

Exodus 22:22-25: Compassion on the poor

Deuteronomy 15: Financial forgiveness (the Sabbatical year)

II. Israel's sins

A. They "trample the poor"

1. They sell the righteous: 2:6

Wealthy creditors are lending money to poor with interest, and when they can't pay, they sell them into slavery (see 2 Kings 4:1-7)

2. They rob the poor of their possessions: 2:8

They keep the garments taken in pledge overnight (see Exodus 22:22-25)

They fine the poor wine and drink it themselves

3. They take advantage of the poor in a corrupt legal system: 2:7

See 5:7, 10-13

City gate = place where legal disputes were held

The rich are bribing judges: judges get rich, rich get off, poor are denied justice

B. So that they can live extravagant lifestyles

1. The decadent lifestyles of the rich: 6:4-6

2. The wealthy women of Israel: 4:1

Demanding expensive lifestyles

They don't intentionally hate the poor; they simply want extravagant lives, and in the quest for that lifestyle, they end up oppressing the poor

C. They continue to do their religion before God

1. They bring the objects of their oppression into the religious ceremony: 2:6-8
2. They go through the motions of worship, but their hearts are focused on making a profit: 8:4-6

II. God's response to Israel's disobedience

A. Call to repentance

1. "Return to me and live": 5:4, 6, 14
2. "I want justice, not your religious activity: 5:21-23
See Micah 6:8

B. Judgment

God will come like a lion (in the form of Assyria): 2:12-16; 3:8, 3:11-12

C. Restoration

One day, God will restore them to their land: 9:11-15

Conclusion

I. Who is our God?

A. Almighty, All-rich King who has a heart for the poor, powerless & oppressed
Psalm 68:4-5: Father of the fatherless, Protector of widows
When poor are mistreated, He gets very angry

B. He wants his people to have the same heart for the poor he does
He gets angry at rich people when:

1. They get rich by oppressing the poor
2. Once they get rich, they forget the poor and don't use their power and wealth to protect and defend the poor.

II. How can we respond?

Most of us aren't part of the group that got rich by intentionally oppressing the poor, but many of us may have forgotten the poor in our wealth

1. Our focus becomes a lifestyle:

A certain level of comfort and economic provision and excess
And in that focus, the poor are not on our radar

2. We aren't hungry for power, but we are afraid of powerlessness
Story of Dave in Zambia: the fear of powerlessness

3. Our focus needs to change

NOT: how can we avoid being vulnerable, powerless, in need?

BUT: How can we use the power and wealth we have to help and empower those without power and wealth?

How can we have hearts for the poor that reflect God's heart?

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. How does the book of Amos contribute to your appreciation for who God is?
3. Reread Amos 8:4-6. Can you relate to the people being described there? When your mind wanders during your public worship of God, where does it most often wander to?
4. Discuss the following statement: "Most of us aren't hungry for power, but we are very afraid of powerlessness. And in our fear of powerlessness, we end up disregarding the poor."
5. Read Matthew 25:31-46. How do you understand this passage, and how seriously do you take it?
6. While most of us probably didn't get rich by intentionally oppressing the poor, do you think most people in Orange County have acquired their wealth through unintentional exploitation of the poor, or through a system that favors the rich at the expense of the poor?
7. What was your reaction to the idea of a benevolence ministry at Grace? What are your questions, concerns, and hopes for this ministry?