

SCRIPTURE READING FOR NOVEMBER 14, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Amos 1:1-2; 5:14-15, 21-24
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹ I am Amos. And I raised sheep near the town of Tekoa when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.

Two years before the earthquake, the Lord gave me several messages about Israel, ² and I said:

When the Lord roars
from Jerusalem,
pasturelands and Mount Carmel
dry up and turn brown.

¹⁴ If you really want to live,
you must stop doing wrong
and start doing right.
I, the Lord God All-Powerful,
will then be on your side,
just as you claim I am.
¹⁵ Choose good instead of evil!
See that **justice** is done.
Maybe I, the Lord All-Powerful,
will be kind to what's left
of your people.

²¹ I, the Lord, hate and despise
your religious celebrations
and your times of worship.

²² I won't accept your offerings
or animal sacrifices—
not even your very best.

²³ No more of your noisy songs!
I won't listen
when you play your harps.

²⁴ But let **justice** and
RIGHTEOUSNESS

flow like a river
that never runs dry.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Amos was a shepherd in Tekoa, a village five miles south of Bethlehem near one of the wildest and emptiest deserts in the world. It's in that desert that Amos became a man of God listening to God's voice, obeying his Word and speaking on his behalf.

He would have had to travel 2 ½ days to get to the nearest marketplace in Samaria. Arriving there he would have encountered a very different world. Teeming with crowds. Louds with commerce. Adorned with displays of ritual worship. Flagrant disparities between rich and poor. The cruelty of the slave trade.

Each trip was a shock to his sensibilities. But on this trip he said something about it. Ordinarily his words would have seem liked the rantings of some sunstruck man from the desert. But not these words. The poetry was vivid and the presentation lucid. And the message? Amos spoke never-before-heard words that had the ring of truth and the authority of revelation.

He spoke about the ugly picture that Hebrew society had become. Strikingly similar to our own. A society that was unfair economically, unashamed morally, unjust socially. They (*like us maybe today*) had lived with it for so long that they no longer saw it. But God sees it, and he's insistent on changing it. On changing us. Judgment is coming.

Sin dulls our spiritual senses and lulls us into self-indulgent sloth, but judgment wakes us up to God. The prophecy of Amos is poetry-language to open our eyes, tenderize our heart so that we might once again have vision. His poetry – simultaneously beautiful and fiercely harsh - depict the intersectionality of social justice and spirituality. (*introduction taken from The Message Bible Translation by Eugene Peterson*)

WHEN WAS THIS? Uzziah was king of Judah 781-740 B.C., and Jeroboam II was king of Israel 783-743 B.C.

justice:: מִשְׁפָּט pronounced /mishpat/ - Justice, it's used to describe the act of a judge deciding a ruling - a judgment. It also means: justice, what is right, rectitude, fairness. The implication is that the judgment is all based in the law - or righteousness (tsedaqah) of YHWH.

RIGHTEOUSNESS:: צְדָקָה pronounced /tsedaqah/ - righteousness. It refers to God's attribute as sovereign. So at its heart it a reference back to how and who God is when used to describe people. It's closely associated with honesty, justice, love, action, what is right and just. *What God would do/is. If sin pulls us away from God, it's its opposite.*

¹³ It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ He found in the temple those who were selling cattle, sheep, and doves, as well as those involved in exchanging currency sitting there. ¹⁵ He made a whip from ropes and chased them all out of the temple, including the cattle and the sheep. He scattered the coins and overturned the tables of those who exchanged currency. ¹⁶ He said to the dove sellers, “Get these things out of here! Don’t make my Father’s house a place of business.” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written, Passion for your house consumes me.

¹⁸ Then the Jewish leaders asked him, “By what authority are you doing these things? What miraculous sign will you show us?”

¹⁹ Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple and in three days I’ll raise it up.”

²⁰ The Jewish leaders replied, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But the temple Jesus was talking about was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered what he had said, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Amos implies that the people are hypocrites – saying one thing in prayer and living another way in terms of their money and relationships. Jesus condemns the profit made off the backs of those coming to worship God. We see in that was is un-just, but what are they saying is just?
- If righteousness is what God is and does. How can we be righteous or do righteous things? From where comes your sense of what is right, just, or righteous? How do you discern that in the mix of everything in your life and our world?
- Only Amos and Jesus speak up and out in these texts. Everyone else seems to be passive bystanders to the injustice occurring. How might we be engaged bystanders and active witnesses to the injustice in our world today – speaking up and out?
- What invitation do you heard the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

John tells his story of the person and life of Jesus of Nazareth with great literary skill, and a poetic touch. It’s filled with metaphors and references to both the Hebrew Scriptures and then-contemporary Greek philosophy. The depth of telling of Jesus in conversation with the culture of his day leads scholars to think that his is written later than the other gospels. John roots his telling of Jesus in a retelling of the creation story of Genesis. John 1 echoes and intersects Genesis 1. In Jesus, God speaks – truth, wisdom and new creation.

those involved in

exchanging currency::

Worshippers regularly came to the Temple to offer sacrifice to YHWH. If they traveled far they bought the animals or grains to offer in sacrifice there at the Temple as it was more convenient than transporting it for their whole journey. But they had to first change their money into “temple” money. For the Roman coins used in the Empire contained an image of the Emperor – a sin and blasphemy for the Israelite people. So that coin would be changed into coin used only in the Temple. It’s possible that those moneychangers charged unfair fees or unjust exchange rates to those coming to worship God – all in God’s house.