

Discipleship Group Weekly Resources

Week 5

Passage: Amos 5

Big Thought:

Definition of Terms:

Justice (*mišpāt*) derives from the root *špt*, “to judge,” which indicates the restoration of harmony and wholeness (*šālôm*) between individuals or within a community.

Righteousness (*tsēdāqāh* or *tsedeq*) is a relational term that entails both the act and results of faithfully maintaining the integrity of the relationship so that both parties enjoy the benefits of the relationship. In God’s relationship with Israel, God’s righteousness is primarily displayed in acts of deliverance and preservation of Israel, and Israel’s righteousness is shown in faithful response to God, demonstrated through keeping his commands. In keeping the commands of God, the beneficial relationship among Israelites is also maintained

Israel is as good as dead, but not all hope is lost which is indicated by Amos’ repeated call for Israel to “Seek the LORD and live” (5:4,6,14). Israel has turned away from God and it has caused them to not love their neighbors. Injustice is rampant and righteousness has been cast aside (5:7). God is displeased with Israel and rejects their offerings because humans cannot love God if we do not also love our neighbor. Because God is good, he must address the injustice by saving the oppressed and judging/punishing the oppressors. Even still – though God must enact punishment and judgement – the long-term goal is mercy and hope for those who turn to him and seek goodness, justice, and righteousness (5:14-15)

5:1-6 – Amos laments over Israel’s failure at such a young state. Israel will not grow and multiply as God would have hoped, instead just a faithful remnant – 10% will remain. However, all hope is not lost. God calls Israel to, “Seek me and live” (v. 4,6) for seeking other nations and their gods will surely lead to death.

5:7-15 – God reads out charges against Israel as if in court and justice must be served. Israel hates the one who tells the truth (v. 10), they take bribes (v. 12), they trample and oppress the poor (v. 11, 12), and they exact taxes of grain on the poor (v. 11). Israel has created “evil times” (v. 13), but are called again to repent and seek good that they may live. When they seek good/seek God the justice and righteousness they have lost will be restored because when God is at the center of a community that community is characterized by love of neighbor, justice, and right relationship.

5:16-27 – God reads his verdict and issues a warning and punishment. The judgement carries echoes of the plague of the firstborn (Exodus 12:29-30) and is altogether undesirable. Justice is the desired and expected response to what God has done for Israel. God wants justice to “roll on like a river” and “righteousness like a never-failing stream” (v. 24), but the pervasive injustice and destruction of righteousness has made their religious assemblies and worship altogether disgusting to God. The reason God rejected their worship was not that God took issue with how they conducted their gatherings, but how they conducted themselves the other six days of the week. Worship and ethics/life cannot be separated. You cannot love God if you do not also love your neighbor. God is clear about the offerings and worship He seeks – love of neighbor, justice, and righteousness. In the absence of what God seeks, God declares a punishment of exile that will eventually come at the hands of Assyria.

3 Questions:

1. What are two main takeaways from this chapter of Amos?
2. How can we learn from Israel and better reflect the justice and righteousness of God this week? What is something specific you can do to restore shalom/wholeness and bolster right relationships within the community?
3. Though God's ultimate goal is mercy and restoration, God must enact judgement and destruction to address the wrong of Israel. He cannot spare the rod. Can you think of a time where you have witnessed God's justice and restoration?