

Discipleship Group Weekly Resources

Week 8

Passage: Amos 8

Big Thought:

In Amos's third vision, God said he wouldn't pass over Ephraim again and Amos doesn't make another plea for God to relent on their behalf. The same thing happens here in chapter 8 after Amos' fourth vision. This vision of the basket of ripe fruit completes the chain that started back in chapter 7. We learn from Amos that there are times when prayers get answered and times when they don't and this series of visions seems to imply that there are times to pray and times not to pray – two of the visions Amos prays and gets an answer and two visions he doesn't. It is God's word that has spoken and we must hear it.

It's possible that Amos reported these visions as a way to get through to the people, ask them to change, and seek God's restorative love. Amos prays to God in order for him to change his mind and relent, but Amos reports those conversations to the people so that they will change and seek the God of mercy. We see in the first two visions that it is possible for God to relent, but the third and fourth make it clear that the offer won't be open forever – God is still just and judgement for the evil of the people is coming if their hearts don't turn in repentance toward God.

We are reminded in this chapter of why God's judgement is coming to his people. God has already made it clear that he doesn't care for their worship because they still ignore those in need – they don't live out their loyalty to God. God is also bothered by the people within the worship service because they are so ready to leave and resume all of the things they call more important – nobody's heart is engaged in worship because they're just ready to bolt out the door to "real life." And to make matters worse, the business they engage in outside of worship they do dishonestly. Chapter 8 adds a new feature to God's judgement on the people. Amos reported on the way God's people basically told the prophets to not prophesy. God is going to give them what they want. The people will want to hear a message from God but won't be able to get one because they ignored the prophets. Ironic. If only they started listening to God's message...

1 Big Question:

1. Let's reflect some of God's judgements on his people (and consider the questions below):
 - a. Empty worship that's just for people to feel good, but doesn't result in heart change or engaging in a life of loving others – going through the motions and not living what they're singing to God.
 - b. Having misplaced priorities so that worship feels like an inconvenience to their weekly schedules – they can't wait to get out of worship so they can go on with "real life."

- c. Treating people dishonestly and not caring for the poor or needy – not advocating for justice and participating in oppressive systems instead of living with hospitality and radical generosity.
2. Reflecting on those judgments, let's consider these questions:
- a. Which of these judgments challenges you the most? Or makes you the most uncomfortable?
 - b. What parts of these judgments are true of us today?
 - c. How do we live faithfully and avoid the same pitfalls as the people Amos is writing too?
 - d. How is God calling you to grow in the areas of faith Amos has highlighted?