

# The Prophets: The Tension of Judgement and Grace

March 3, 2019

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,  
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,  
To GROW as followers of Jesus,  
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.  
- CG Mission Statement

## Worship: Romans 12:1-3

*(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship)*

---

Read through Romans 12:1-3 as a group.

## Icebreaker

---

What is your favorite cookie?

## Text for Discussion: Amos 5

---

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

## Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

---

The final 16 books of the Old Testament tell of God's messengers, the prophets. We often think of these stories as prophetic (foretelling the future), but their primary role was to remind the Israelites of their covenant with the Lord. God had given instructions for how to live as His people. The prophets were shining a light on their unfaithfulness, warning of impending destruction if they continued down this path, and calling them to turn back to God. These were heavy messages, holding in tension condemnation and destruction with mercy and forgiveness.

**A Call to Be Faithful to God.** This is the central message of the prophets. The people of God are to keep the covenant – treasuring Him, relying on Him, exercising justice and mercy. It's important to remember that God's call for our faithfulness and obedience isn't just about rule following. Forgiving others and being merciful are tied to the story of our identity. As God's people, we are to reflect His light and love to the world. Since God shows mercy to the weak – and because we received mercy in our weakness – we must be transformed into merciful people. To not is to be hypocritical and inconsistent with our identity in Christ.

**Grace does demand.** The biblical vision of grace is that it must change and redefine us. This was part of Amos's condemnation of Israel. God rejects their feasts and sacrifices because their religious life was a sham. Their acts of worship didn't flow into their practical lives. This was a dangerous blind spot – one we are guilty of when we reduce our faith to checking the box of "going to church" at the cost of seeking God, seeking good and seeking justice. The demands of grace are not rules we must keep or an ethic to uphold. Grace fills our hearts with joy, thankfulness, humility and love. It empowers us to be merciful. The answer isn't to try to be more religious or humble or merciful. We must first seek and rest in the mercies of God. When that sinks in, our Father's mercy and love will flow through us.

**There is condemnation for sin, but mercy for the repentant.** In Amos, we see that despite their sin, God's people had grown spiritually complacent. They were religiously active but lacked a desire for God. The same is true of us. Just because we are following the rules and think we are okay, does not mean God agrees: the center of our faith is not in the activities. The call of Amos is for us to seek the Lord and live. For those who know their need of mercy, there is mercy to be found.

**The Tension Resolved: The Cross.** Throughout the stories of the prophets, there is warning but there is hope. God must confront evil, but He remains faithful and committed to His people. God is holy and just and honors

His covenant, but He remains gracious and merciful. All of these truths come together at the cross of Jesus. The fullness of God's judgment and condemnation of sin were poured out on Jesus, and so His justice was fully satisfied. It was the ultimate act of sacrificial love as the tension of judgment and grace were resolved. This is what displays God's holiness and love; this is what assures us of our full forgiveness and changes us from within.

## Guiding Question of the Week

*(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)*

---

**What does God mean when He says, "Seek the Lord and live." Amos 5:6 and, "Seek good not evil, that you might live." Amos 5:14?**

## Questions for Discussion

*(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)*

- What did you learn about how to read and understand the prophets from the sermon?
- What is the heart issue behind the actions of the people in Amos 5?
  - They seemed to have forgotten their story. What was their story? See Amos 2:10 and 3:1.
  - Why do we tend to forget our story and sometimes become complacent in our relationship with God?
- In what ways is our own Christian culture like the culture of Amos' day?
  - What injustices could God be calling us to? What would repentance look like?
- What does God mean when He says, "Seek the Lord and live." Amos 5:6 and, "Seek good not evil, that you might live." Amos 5:14?
  - What things were they seeking besides Him?
  - Compare this to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
- "The story of the mercies of Jesus must make us a merciful people." Why is this so?
  - Share a story of Jesus' mercy toward you. How does His mercy toward you cause you to be a merciful person?
  - Do you view your concern for justice and righteousness (5:24) as a part of your faith story? If so, share how you express it?
- Why does God forgive us? How did judgement and grace come together at the cross?
- What is challenging about this confrontation in the book of Amos? What is comforting?

## Prayer

---

Lord, You have told us to defend the fatherless and the widow, to provide for the hungry, thirsty, and naked and to love our enemy. We repent of ways we may have not made this a part of our faith story. In all things, we want to follow Your will and take up Your call to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you. Thank you that Your Spirit indwells us to enable us to be the people you would have us be. Amen

## Experiment of the Month

*(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)*

---

**Spiritual Formation Experiment** - Once a day, take a few moments to think, talk, or journal through the emotions acronym SHAGSLAG - Shame, Hurt, Anger, Glad, Sad, Lonely, Afraid, Guilty - to identify how you are feeling. Do an internet search on the best Psalm for that emotion. Pray through that Psalm, naming the cares of your heart. Share the outcome of this experiment with your community group next time you meet.

**Missional Experiment** - What you would include if you were to tell a brief, concise, yet complete version of God's story to an unbelieving friend or neighbor if asked? Write the story and practice sharing it with your community group for feedback. Feedback questions to ask - Did this story make sense to you? What sticks out to you? What did you learn about God? What do you wonder about? Ask a friend if you can practice telling the story to them as you learn to share it from memory. Have the community group pray that God would give you the opportunity to share it with an unbelieving friend, neighbor, or loved one.