

ActNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Connect Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Connect Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

Amos: Hearing God's Warnings

Dr Daniel Lee
Amos 3-6

SERMON SYNOPSIS

- There are many books and passages in the Bible concerning worship such as Leviticus on what, how and when to offer sacrifices to God; various Bible heroes offered sacrifices in the Old Testament; and Israel sang praises to God from the Book of Psalms. When God suddenly said He did not want His people to worship Him anymore as He no longer accepted their worship of Him, something had gone very wrong. Hence, we know that *that* was a warning.
- What was Israel's religious life like and what did Israel do wrong?
 - a. What they did religiously: Amos 4:4b-5. God acknowledged that Israel *loved* to worship & *was willing* to worship God by faithfully bringing all kinds of tithes, offerings and sacrifices to worship Him.
 - b. What did Israel do wrong: Amos 6:8. God strongly indicted Israel because they hated the judge at the gate¹, abhorred the speaker of truth, trampled on the poor, afflicted the righteous, took bribes, pushed aside the needy at the gate & took a portion of the grains from the poor. (Amos 5:10-11). The rich perverted justice for their own gain.
 - c. What are the consequences: Judgment fell upon Israel because they transgressed and sinned against the holy, righteous, sovereign Lord (Amos 5:12). The houses they built and the vineyards they planted were taken away by the enemies and they were denied the enjoyment of the fruit of their ill-gotten labour. Because of this injustice (Amos 5:23-24), God hated their festivals and assemblies even though they offered burnt offerings and grain offerings, and even the best animals were not accepted. God would not even listen to their songs of their harps.
- Singapore is rich and prosperous like the northern kingdom, Israel. We faithfully attend church and bring our pledges, tithes and offerings, and sing praises to God. Would it be possible that God would also reject our worship and sacrifices because we too have disregarded the injustice and unrighteous acts faced by the lowly and needy in our society?

God's ears are inclined towards the poor and needy. The Israelites thought that by giving extravagantly at the temple, God would ignore how they were oppressing the poor. We would be wise to examine & ask ourselves in the light of God's Word, with the help of the Holy Spirit and from a contrite heart, "*In what way have we also denied the basic protection and human dignity for the poor and needy?*" We need to increase our awareness of injustice and unrighteous dealings in our society &/or the world as we are created in God's image and are redeemed by Jesus to reflect who God is – that He delights and exercises steadfast love, justice and

¹The gate in ancient city is a central meeting place of the city where the local court was held and the citizens could bring their cases for appeal to a council of elders.

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righteousness (Jeremiah 9:24) to the people around us. By living this way, we will certainly not incur God's wrath and rejection of our worship of Him.

- Conclusion – While we worship in church on Sundays, we cannot ignore social justice in the world every other day. Each of us must do justice and engage in righteous living within the church & out in the world. As God's children, we must ensure justice and righteousness are upheld in our society and world. May God's warning to the Israelites through Amos be a warning to us individually and as a church, or God's righteous & just judgment would befall us as it did for Israel who chose not to heed the Lord.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RELATE

1. We often hear stories of injustice of the poor and needy or we were unjustly treated. How did we feel when we hear the victim's stories or as a victim? Was every case of injustice resolved? How well was that injustice resolved?

REFLECT

2. There are two parts in the sermon lesson. One is to guard ourselves from becoming doers of injustice, knowingly or unknowingly. The other is to know how to respond to injustice. What does the scripture show us how to avoid becoming a practitioner of injustice? How should we respond to injustice we encounter in our community?

[Verses to help us go deeper: Psalms 37:5-6, 27-29; Micah 6:8; Romans 12:9,19]

RESPOND

3. How can we act responsibly in biblical ways to represent Christ in dealing with injustice around us?
[Verses to help us go deeper: 1 John 2:9; James 2:2-4; 1 Peter 2:13-17]

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for forgiveness of our sins of injustice in any part of our lives we might have been unknowingly, knowingly or selfishly carrying out injustice for our own benefit.
- Thank the Lord for His grace in helping us become aware of injustice and unrighteous acts against the poor and needy in our society that we may confess and repent before Him.
- Thank God that because of His grace and forgiveness, we can renew our covenant with Him as faithful disciples of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE ON

"For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel, Seek Me that you may live." [Amos 5:4 NASB 1995]