

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: Seeing God's Visions

Tim Wade

### SERMON SYNOPSIS

- **Past three sermons regarding the Book of Amos:**
  - ✓ What is the Good Life? It is basically a life lived in and by the ways of the Lord.
  - ✓ What is the Bad Life? It is basically a life that is NOT living in and by the ways of the Lord.
  - ✓ Hearing God's Warnings – God calls us to heed His warnings by returning to Him evidenced in living our lives according to ALL that is written in God's Word.

- **Aspects of our lives that God is giving us a warning nudge:**

Three broad warnings were highlighted for our prayers & letting God search our hearts:

Hidden Sins & Complacency – Are we harbouring *secret sins* like pornography, infidelity, greed? Are we *complacent* in our Christian living? Eg. **We say we believe in grace and we receive grace, but we do not extend grace to others. And so, we hold grudges, cancel people, and cling to bitterness. Or we go to church, but our lives remain unchanged because we merely listen to God's Word & not do what it says.**

Empty Religion – Are we treating religion as cultural habit, that is, 'doing' or 'saying' Christian or spiritual things out of mere routine, tradition, or comfort? Are we confessing our sins without truly repenting? If so, we must realize that religion without transformation disgusts God. True Christianity is transformative, that is, we call upon **Jesus** to *change* the way we live, work, spend, relate to others, etc... **to be like Him.**

Discomfort versus Complacency – Being like Jesus means to *embrace* Jesus' values and *discard* our preferred values. The values we live by determine the choices & decisions we make with regards to our perspectives on life, people and situations, and thereby shape our attitudes and how we think, feel, speak, behave and live. **This is not comfortable.** But discomfort is the soil of transformation. Comfort, on the other hand, can farm the weeds of complacency. And complacency is dangerous to faith. It lulls us into thinking that "showing up" for Sunday Service, or Connect Group, or serving in a ministry is enough. But discipleship is not about just showing up, it is about *being changed to be more like Jesus*. Are we really seeking the Lord? Or have we been seeking comfort all this while?

- **Five Visions Amos saw** – First, locusts devouring the land (Amos 7:1) & second, fire consuming the land (Amos 7:4). Land in the Old Testament signifies *covenant blessing, identity, and livelihood*. To lose it meant losing both **provision** and **identity**. And for these two times, God held back judgment at Amos' prayer. Third, a plumb line was seen beside a wall (Amos 7:7). The wall that was once straight is now leaned. This signifies **how far Israel had strayed from God's righteousness**. This time, no intercession could turn away God's judgment. Fourth, Amos saw a basket of ripe fruits (Amos 8:1) & this signifies that Israel was **ripe for judgment**. Lastly, the collapsed altar (Amos 9:1) signifies **total destruction** & not even the sanctuary could protect them. God's judgment *is* real. His patience *has* limits.

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Where are we today, personally & as a local church? Are we still in the early visions, where intercession holds back judgment? Or is there no escaping the consequences of our NOT heeding God's patient & gracious warning nudges?

- **Conclusion & Response** – For Israel, judgment meant destruction and for Judah, exile. Yet God's grace abounds as He faithfully spared the righteous. So to God's faithful children, we are encouraged to continue to obey God's Word, keep on serving, inspire others to live likewise & keep moving forward in knowing God & becoming like Christ. Today, God's grace abounds too. God lavishes His Grace on all who truly repent of our sins (Romans 8:1 & 1 John 1:9). God earnestly desires us to receive His forgiveness & restoration through Christ who has taken the judgment in our place on the cross. And so, we are exhorted to *seek the Lord and live* (Amos 5:4 & 6) and it serves as both a warning & an invitation. This means that God wants justice, mercy, righteousness and NOT empty ritual.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### RELATE

1. Describe the emotions people feel and the thoughts that go through their minds when they specifically gave instructions to someone and that person chooses to disregard & ignore.

### REFLECT

2. From the Scripture passages below, describe the emotions God feels and the thoughts He has when we, His children, disregard & ignore His Word or warnings to us and often, repeatedly. Take note of God's actions and the reasons for His actions too!

[Verses to help us go deeper: Hebrews 12:5-11; Hosea 11:1-9; Psalm 103:8-14,17-18]

### RESPOND

3. *Identify* a specific aspect of life that the Lord is presently giving you a warning nudge & also *discern* where are you at right now – is it a gentle warning or is there no escaping of consequences this time? Share with your CG what you are going to do about it and the reason(s) why.

## PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God for His grace, compassion & redeeming heart – as He does not punish us immediately but forgives *countless times* that we would repent and return to Him with a whole heart.
- Pray for one another in the CG, everyone in TPMC and the Church of Jesus Christ to *seek the Lord and live*.

## SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE ON

"Seek the Lord and live..." [Amos 5:6]