

Study Prophet – Become Prophetic (3) Amos

Seek the Lord and Live

Amos 9:11–15

Today is the third Sunday in our series on the Minor Prophets. The goal of series is to study the prophet so that we can become a prophetic people—people who hear God’s Word, are changed by it, and speak His truth with humility and courage.

Today we meet **Amos**. His name means, “the one who bears a burden,” implying he was carrying the burden of God’s heart for His people.

One interesting fact about Amos is that he was not a professional prophet.

Look at what he says about himself:

“I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ (Amos 7:14-15).

In those days there were “schools” or guilds of prophets— sometimes called the *sons of the prophets*. These people were trained for temple services, teachings, and giving counsel to kings (cf. 1 Sam 10:5; 2 Kgs 2:3; 6:1). But Amos was not in any of those circles. He was an ordinary layman.

So, in today’s context, he did not go to the seminary, he was not serving in a church by vocation in any sense. So, he’s like most of you here. That’s why Amos is a powerful book that shows **God can use anybody**. A seminary degree from a good school is good, but is not a ‘must have’ to be prophetic. You don’t need a title to feel the burden of God’s heart.

Look at what Amos says: “The Sovereign Lord has spoken—who can but prophesy?” (*Amos 3:8*)

You just need an ear to hear what God speaks.

And certainly, Amos had those ears.

So, if you read the book closely, you'll notice how often he says, "*This is what the Lord says,*" or "*declares the Lord.*" I counted them all. In the NIV it's about fifty times.

Amos speaks because God speaks.

So, as we dive into this book, I hope and pray that God who spoke to Amos will also speak to us today. And most importantly, that we would have ears to hear God's words and hearts to feel the burden of God's heart – so that all of us will **speak because God speaks and go wherever God's heart leads us.**

(Let's pray.)

Amos ministered around the same time as Hosea, during the reign of **Jeroboam II** in the northern Israel. It was a time of **national strength and booming economy**—one of those “good times” in Israel's history. Israel had expanded its borders, won many wars, and enjoyed unprecedented wealth and prosperity.

It was also very **religious** time. People streamed to Bethel and Gilgal – their major worship centers. They brought sacrifices, offerings, and the temple was filled with loud music and celebration.

So, from the outside, everything looked perfect.

People proudly said, “God is with us!” “God blessed Israel!” “We're God's chosen people.”

But God said, **“No—you have a serious problem.”**

God declares “Woe to you” twice in Amos.

The first **“Woe to you”** comes in **Amos 5:18–20**:

“Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. ... —pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness.”

What's happening here is that these people thought when God's justice came, it would fall on *everyone else*—not on them. They were naively believed the Day of the Lord would be a great day of victory and deliverance, because surely God was on *their* side. Because they worshiped

God, they brought their offerings to God, they showed up at the temple, raised their voice to sing praises to God. So they said, “I’m ready for the Day of the Lord! I cannot wait for it! Come, Lord, come!”

But God basically says, “You think I’m on your side? How about we change the question. Are you really on My side?”

The point is, it’s possible to be deeply religious and yet have nothing to do with God’s righteousness. You may call yourself a Christian, but may not be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Hear what Jesus said: *“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, drive out demons, and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”* (Matthew 7:22–23).

That’s a striking statement.

Listen to me this.

Jesus is exposing here the danger of **spiritual self-deception**—thinking we know Him because we do religious things, while our hearts are far from Him.

So, the real question we must ask is not, “Do I know Jesus?” But “Does Jesus really know me?” “Is my name really written in the book of life?”

Think of it this way: After this worship service, let’s say you go to DC, walk up to the White House and tell the guard, “Let me in—I know Donald Trump! I’ve seen him all the time – on TV. I know what he sounds like! I know what he looks like! You gotta let me in!” The guard would laugh at you and will think you’re out of your mind.

But what if Donald Trump really knows you. And he steps out of the Oval Office, points at you, and says, “Guard, Guard! It’s okay, I know him. I know her. Let them in!”

That’s a totally different story.

In the same way, what really matters is “Does God really know me?”

My friends, religion is nothing if you don’t have a relationship with the Lord.

Having relationship means you have a personal, intimate, heart-to-heart connection.

Jesus said, “**Abide in Me...Apart from Me, you can’t do nothing!**” (Jn. 15:5). Meaning, you should be connected with Jesus. So that you know what’s in His heart. You feel the burden in His heart. You know what breaks His heart. What brings joy to His heart.

When I come home with a gloomy face, my kids will ask me, “Daddy, are you okay?” “Did something happen?” And of course, if I see them looking sad, I ask, “Are you alright?” “Do you need help?”

That’s exactly how God feels toward us. He notices when your heart is heavy. He cares deeply about what you’re going through. He’s near to the brokenhearted—He really is.

But here’s the question we often forget to ask: ***Do I care about God’s heart? Do I know what He desires from me?***

Apparently, the people in Amos’s day were very religious—but they didn’t have a real relationship with God.

That’s why God says in Amos (and watch out for the harsh language here):

“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.” (*Amos 5:21–23*)

Imagine that—God rejecting worship songs! Why?

Because **their music was loud but their hearts were cold.**

Their hands were up on Sundays, but the poor were ignored on Mondays.

They talked about grace but their life reflects nothing about mercy.

They worshipped God but had no interests in what God desires.

Then comes the famous verse—**God’s heartbeat:**

God declares: “**Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.**”

(v.24)

That's what true worship looks like. That's what God desires! **Not just singing songs, but living truth. Not just attending church, but embodying God's compassion in our daily lives.**

Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Mt. 7:21)

Let's pause here, and how about we ask this serious question:

It's not about, "Do I know Him?" The real question is, "Does God really know me?"

It's not about what I do in His name, but it's really about 'Does God takes delight in what I do in His name'?

Is this worship – the songs we sing, the offerings we give, even the sermon I'm preaching right now – will be pleasing to God? Will God accept this?

When that Day comes—the Day of Judgment—will it be a day of salvation for me? Or will I hear those heartbreaking words from Jesus: *"I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers."*

Friends, the focus must always—**always, always, always**—be on **God Himself**, not on ourselves, not on others.

God speaks second "Woe to you" in chapter 6.

"Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria..." (v.1)

As I mentioned earlier, when Amos lived, life was good—really good. People were living large! They had comfy ivory beds—basically the Tempur-Pedic mattress of the ancient world. They threw fancy dinner parties with endless food and fine wine, and they loved their music—probably had the ancient version of Spotify playing harp 100 hits. Some folks even had *multiple* houses—one for the summer, one for the winter! Can you imagine that? Life was comfortable, secure, and full of luxury.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking: "Pastor, that's not me! I don't live in luxury. I don't own a private jet, a yacht, or a mansion—honestly, I live by paycheck to paycheck." And I hear you. I know even some of you are walking through real financial challenges right now.

But here's what we often forget—just living in America already puts us among the most comfortable people in the world. There are still millions, even billions, who struggle daily for things we don't really think about—like clean water, or clean food. How many of you woke up this morning, thinking about, “Where do I get the clean water?”

Here's the point God was making: the more we get used to our comfort, the easier it becomes to ignore the pain and injustice around us. And that's exactly what was happening in Amos's day.

So, God declares:

“You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.” (v.6)

The Message bible makes it more clear:

“God declares: “Woe to those who live in luxury and expect everyone else to serve them! Woe to those who live only for today, indifferent to the fate of others! ... Woe to those addicted to feeling good—life without pain! those obsessed with looking good—life without wrinkles! They could not care less about their country going to ruin.”

In other words, God is saying, “Your nation is collapsing spiritually and morally, your own people are suffering from poverty and injustice, yet you feel no sorrow. You're too busy enjoying your life. You don't see the decay around you.” That's not my heart.

This reminds me of Jesus' story about a rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus. The rich man lived in luxury every day, while Lazarus suffered at his gate, longing for crumbs. When they both died, Lazarus was comforted in heaven, but the rich man was tormented in hell.

Now, notice what Jesus was teaching here—**the rich man's condemnation was not because of what he *did*, but because of what he *did not do*.** His sin wasn't cruelty; it was indifference. He ignored the suffering that was right in front of him.

That's exactly what was happening in Amos's time. And God was saying, “That's not My heart.” “And you don't care about My heart.”

So God responds, “I despise your pride. Your joyful songs will be silenced, and your strongholds will crumble.” (v.8)

It’s a sobering moment.

It feels as if God has turned away and there’s no way back. The people must have wondered, *“Is this it? Have we gone too far?”*

But then, just as we heard from Joel last Sunday—those two powerful words **“Even now” or God’s heartbeat of relentless love in Hosea echoes in the voice of Amos.** Because the same heartbeat is running through Amos. Here, God still cries out—not through a famous priest, or a big-time preacher, but through a layman, who was tending the sheep – someone who just felt the burden of God’s heart —crying out:

“Seek the Lord and live!” (v.6)

“Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say He is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.” (vv.14–15)

And then God says (this is important):

“Go out into the streets and lament loudly! Fill the malls and shops with cries of doom! Weep loudly, ‘Not me! Not us, Not now!’ Empty offices, stores, factories, workplaces. Enlist everyone in the general lament. I want to hear it loud and clear when I make my visit.” (This is) God’s Decree.” (vv. 16-17, MSG)

My friends, this is God’s call to true repentance. He’s urging us not just to tear our garments, but render our hearts; don’t do it just to be seen in the public, but do it in your deepest heart where only God can see—shedding tears from a deep sorrow for what you have done, or for what you have not done, for breaking God’s heart, ignoring the cry of the needy.

God promises then, there will be redemption. Forgiveness. And salvation.

The book of Amos ends with the word of hope. God promises the restoration of His people. God says, “I will destroy the sinful kingdom... yet I will not totally destroy the descendants of Jacob.” (*Amos 9:8*)

God also says: “In that day I will restore David’s fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be...”

That promise of restoration comes through a people called **the remnant**.

Amos writes,

“Maybe God ... will notice your remnant and be gracious.” (Amos 5:15b, MSG)

Circle that word in your mind—**remnant**. It’s one of the most important themes in the entire Bible.

All throughout history, God has kept a remnant to make His promise alive.

In every generation, when the majority of the people walk away from God, there are always a few who remain on God’s side— a faithful remnant.

Most of the time, they were not famous. They were not many. They were not the mainstream. But through them, God’s redemptive work never died out.

Think of **Noah and his family, Joshua and Caleb, Rahab, Ruth, Elijah**, and yes, **Amos**. God used these ordinary people—who refused to bow down to the idols of their age, who felt the burden of God’s heart, and who spoke His truth humbly yet boldly.

And their faith was not in vain. Because a few hundred years later, their words came true—the Messiah came. Jesus Christ died for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and promised to return again to judge the living and the dead.

Then Jesus established His Church—that’s you and me—to be the ‘remnant’ in our generation: a people who remain faithful, who carry God’s burden in their hearts, and who speak His heart in grace and truth to this world.

That’s the heart behind this sermon series. As we study the prophets, our goal is not just to learn prophet—it’s to hear the **heartbeat of God** and to feel the **burden of God’s heart**. So that through us, even though we are small and perhaps, ‘nobody’ in the world’s eyes, but remember this: **God’s redemptive story always begins and ends with His faithful remnants.**

So, hear the God’s heartbeat today from Amos:

Seek the Lord and live.

Not religion, but **relationship**.

Not comfort, but **compassion**.

Not pride, but **humility**.

Let's be Amos in our day and time—who feels the burden of God's heart, and we speak because God speaks to a world God so deeply loves and cares.

While I was preparing this message, God convicted me deeply of one thing—something I must share with you before we close.

Jesus said the greatest commandments are these: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,”* and *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

As we look ahead to our Next Year Planning Meeting next month, I want to make a prayerful and, perhaps, radical suggestion—a holy shift in how we live out these two greatest commandments as a church.

What if we committed ourselves—our hearts, our hands, and even our budget—to love both God and people as God intended?

What if **50%** of our church budget will be dedicated to loving God—by caring for His church, nurturing His people, and sustaining the ministry here—and the other **50%** goes into the world—to love the world as God loves: to missions, to making disciples, to serving our community, and of course, those in need?

And I'm suggesting this not just as a financial plan, but as a spiritual realignment.

Because Amos reminds us today that God's heart beats for the broken, the forgotten, the voiceless. True worship, God says, is not the volume of our songs—but the temperature of our love towards others.

So I want to challenge us, prayerfully, to listen to that heartbeat—to let God's compassion become our compass.

The final decision will be made next month, but this is my heartfelt pastoral suggestion:

Let's become a church that doesn't just sing about God's love but *display* it.

Let's become a people who don't just pray for revival but *live out* it.

Let's become God's prophetic remnant in our generation—humble, faithful, courageous, and generous—so that through us, justice will roll like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream.

Most importantly, let's make our heavenly Father's heart happy.

Let's pray.

Gracious and merciful God,

You are the Lord who still speaks—through prophets, through Your Word, and through the whisper of Your Holy Spirit in our hearts. Today, we've heard Your call once again: "*Seek the Lord and live.*"

Forgive us, Lord, for when our worship has been loud but our hearts have been cold... when we've sought comfort more than compassion, and religion more than relationship. Break our hearts for what breaks Yours. Teach us to let justice roll like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream.

For those who have wandered far from You—prodigal sons and daughters—let them hear Your voice calling them home even now.

For those who are seeking, not yet sure where to turn, let them find life and peace in Jesus Christ, the Living Word.

Lord, make us Your remnants in this generation—humble, faithful, and courageous people who carry the burden of Your heart and speak Your truth with love.

May revival begin in us, restoration flow through us, and Your glory shine upon us.

In Jesus' mighty name we pray,

Amen.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does it mean for you personally to "seek the Lord and live"?
2. Are there areas in your life where comfort or routine has dulled your awareness of others' needs?
3. What does true worship look like in your daily life beyond Sunday mornings?
4. How can you, like Amos, be a voice of truth and compassion in your family, workplace, or community?