

November 14, 2021

Amos 1:1-2, 5:14-15,21-24

Justice Rolls Down

Young People's message: In verses 14-15, Amos tells us to love what is good. That we should do good whenever we can. That it is our responsibility to create a just world for everyone. It should be a place where everyone has what they need to live a good and happy life.

Sometimes decisions between good and evil are very easy. When you can see and understand that something is good or evil it is easy to make correct decisions. We choose the good thing because the difference between good and evil is very clear. That is the easy decision and the right thing to do.

The big problem comes when there is no clear choice between a good or evil option. This is where making the good decision becomes more difficult and requires more thought and investigation. We are entering the gray area of decision making. Both choices before us may not be the two best ones to pick from. However they may be the only choices we have now. Then we have to choose the option that is the least evil. The one where the smallest amount of harm could happen.

Another difficult choice is between two equally great options. Which one do you choose so that the most good and the best outcome could happen? These last two choices require a lot of thought, investigation and planning.

Most of life's decisions are not black and white. They are gray at the best of times. Only the shade of gray may change. Always choose the good option if you can. Sometimes the best option is not the most good option. God asks us to try and always pick the good option from the bad. One of the Psalms tells us that the righteous person always does good, even when that decision comes back to cause him problems.

Adult's message: The last two verses is where I'll focus this morning. Amos is saying to the Jews, that when you worship God remember why you are worshipping and Who? In these last two verses God is very upset at the worship the Jews are offering Him. In Amos's day the issue was that the production of worship in the temple became a grand production in itself. The production of worship became the focus. When that occurs, God gets lost in the production. God gets forgotten in the production of worship. Ironically, with God being forgotten, He is cut out of the worship. Amos is saying to the Jews, remember Who and why you are worshipping.

The Jews offered God these elaborate spectacles of worship. They offered many fattened animals to Him. They put on a great show. Yet, Amos tells us that God rejected it all. He was very angry, but why was He angry. What was missing from their worship besides forgetting God. These making these great spectacles of worship had their heads in the production of worship. Their hearts were not where they needed to be. God wanted the Jew's hearts to be concerned about the injustices that were happening in their society. God wanted them to address

these issues and then come to offer worship. When their heads and hearts were in the right places then God would accept their worship.

Jesus talks about this a lot in Matthew's gospel. Mt 9:13, "But go and learn what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Actually, Jesus is quoting Hosea 6:6, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." From Jesus's ministry we have learned that God is love. That when we have love for the sick, hungry and homeless and show them mercy through acts of kindness we are making sacrifice. This actually becomes liturgy and worship. This can be done anywhere and not necessarily in an opulent temple with ornate spectacle. God's priority is that we show love, mercy and compassion to others who are less fortunate.

The Jews built the temple but did not build the Kingdom. Their heads were in the right place, but their hearts were far from where God wanted them to be. Jesus would come centuries later and show them how to put their hearts where they needed to be. His ministry amongst us was the revelation of God's plan on how to build the Kingdom here on earth. To put our hearts in their right places. Jesus expressed it beautifully in the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer. If we know God, we know that He is love. It is this love that makes us look past ourselves and our egos. So that we can help those less fortunate and build the Kingdom here on earth.

Amos is warning the Jews about their ego filled worship. That they are forgetting God in the production. Their heads are in the right place, but their hearts are in the wrong places. How will they ever get to truly know God if their hearts are in the wrong places. God is telling them to look past their egos and cultivate humility. With humility they can learn

love for their neighbor. Who is a reflection of God. Think with your hearts and not so much with your heads. Then start to raise up those less fortunate in society and build the Kingdom here. Then go to the temple and offer humble worship to God.

Amos is a book that addresses the social troubles of his day. The constant battle between our egos and humility. The challenge to discover that God is love and to think with your heart. Jesus's ministry would further these ideas. I think that more of us understand these ideas. Sometimes putting them into action can be difficult. Just the idea that God is love is a radical change in how most people understood the God of their day in Amos's time. God bless and take care, Pastor D.