



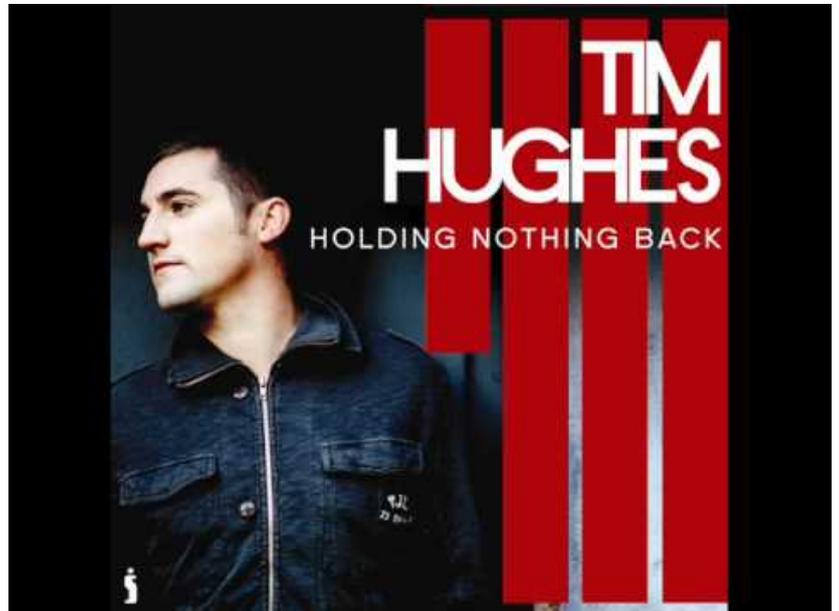
## A Study in Amos 5 – 26.7.2022

### Scripture: Amos 5:1-27

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

### Observation

Amos saw Israel as a vulnerable, helpless young woman. She was surrounded by violent men and no one was able to help her because of her rejection of God. He saw her death and was sad, for her whole life should have been before her. Whereas before, the nation could have sent out a thousand or even a hundred soldiers in her defence, now they would only be able to send out a tenth of those numbers.



*Spend some time in worship.*

Israel was on the verge of judgment. Yet God, in His grace and love, told them all they had to do was seek Him and they would live. They would need to turn away from the other places of worship they had set up, even though these places had once been the locations of great events in their spiritual history.

Jacob had met God in Bethel (Genesis 28:11-19; Genesis 35:1-7). Gilgal was the place of dedication for all those about to move into the Promised Land in the days of Joshua (Joshua 5:1-12). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob experienced incidents at Beersheba (Genesis 21:22-23; 26:23-33; 46:1-5). These were important events in Jewish history, but none of these places were Jerusalem.

Once again Amos brings back his listeners' attention to the corrupt legal system in Israel. But God can still deliver His people. He is the Creator, strong and able to both judge and hold back judgment. No one can stand against Him. But judgment is coming because the people treat one another so badly. The strong take advantage of the weak, both oppressing them and robbing them. The city gates were the courtrooms where law was administered. The weak and poor had no voice there. Those who were godly and righteous did not speak out, fearing retribution and knowing that it would do no good.

In spite of the wealthy building fine houses and owning vineyards as a result of their abuse of the poor, they would not live in them for much longer for God would evict them as a result of their dishonest behaviour. If, however, they turned from their wicked ways, sought God and began to institute justice, it may be that God would cure their land.

It was Jewish practice to hire professional mourners for funerals. But, Amos prophesies, there will be such widespread mourning people would have to hire farmers to wail for them. (As a farmer himself, Amos often linked God's judgments with how farming and the land would be affected by them.)

The day of the Lord was a well-known concept which the people of Israel longed for. However, Amos told them they did not know what they asked for because it would bring judgment rather than mercy. There would be disaster rather than safety for them.

Through Amos, God said He hated the feast days the people celebrated. Many would have been both amazed and hurt by this comment. They imagined they were pleasing God but He told them they were mere ceremonies, with no true love or justice contained within them. God wants justice, mercy and righteousness to flow continuously, rather than rituals and pseudo-worship at appointed times.

It seems likely that Sikkuth and Chium were idols the people had made themselves and brought with them from Egypt. The people clung on to their idols. As a result God would send them into captivity and exile.

#### *Icebreaker:*

What idols do people worship today? Make a list together and then share which ones you struggle to lay aside to enable you to serve and worship God.

#### **Application**

- Where do you see injustice in your world? How does it manifest itself? What do you feel about it?
- What makes you want to take action in regard to poverty and/or injustice? How would you go about this to make a difference? Who would you speak to? How would you ensure action is taken? What role could you play?
- Do you feel you can make a difference – or is the problem too big for you? Why do you respond in this way? Would it help if you decided to act as a group, rather than as individuals? Why? What could you do together?
- In what area of 'expertise' could you help? The vegetable gardens at Refilwe? Teaching children or adults who need help with their reading? Collecting 'sell by date' food from stores to distribute to people who are hungry – or helping in a soup kitchen? What other ideas do you have? Where can you use your gifts to make a difference? How do you feel about getting involved?
- How do you feel about remaining silent and doing nothing? What would taking action mean to you?
- Spend a couple of minutes in silence, listening. What is God saying to you about these things? How would you feel if He spoke about the sheep and the goats and said the words in Matthew 25:35 to you?
  - *For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something, to drink, ...*
- What about the opposite words in Matthew 25:42

- *For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink ...*
- What difference, if any, does this make to your response about taking action?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

### **Prayer**

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

### **Service**

What can you do this week to help someone who is struggling with poverty or suffering injustice? What happens as a result? Report back to the group next week.

### **Extra for Amos 6**

Israel wasn't concerned about other people. All they wanted was their own comfort. This was not the rest that Jesus later offered his followers for the people of Israel were indifferent, lazy and self-indulgent. This is why God promised to judge them. Amos urged them to compare themselves with their pagan neighbours. They were not so different from the cities which had already experienced God's judgment. God wanted Israel to know they were next because they were no better than the

others. When the people of God prosper that prosperity needs to be used for God's glory rather than indulging themselves. But the way Israel was handling their prosperity would result in those who led the country would lead the people into captivity when the Assyrians conquered Israel. God made it clear He hated Israel's pride and would send an army to bring them down. People would be so terrified at the thought of God's judgment they would not even want to hear the name of the Lord spoken aloud.

Just as horses cannot be run over rough ground, so Israel could not expect any good result as a result of their behaviour. This was a proverb that was well known at the time. It was asked as a question – 'Shall horses run upon the rock?' It implied that if nothing could be done then it was not worth making any effort to do anything.

Once again Amos returned to the thread of his message: Because of Israel's sin they would be judged through a nation that would conquer them. There was no escape for them for God would take action.

### **Bibliography**

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/amos-5/>

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/amos-6/>