

# **Sermon Outline: A Meaningful Life**

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*SUMMARY: Through the prophet Amos, God wants to teach about the right living, right seeking and right worshipping which he expects from the people of Israel. This was shared with the people through the vision of the prophet Amos. We can see it in Amos 1:1-2 and 2:6-7; 5:14-15; and 5:21-24.*

## **Introduction**

In 1:1 we read that Amos was a shepherd of Tekoa, that Amos had a vision two years before the earthquake, and that the vision was during the time of King Uzziah. God had chosen Amos to speak about the sins of Israel, his judgement and expectations of the people of Israel.

## **The Right Way of Living (2:6-7)**

Verses 6 and 7 refer to the countless crimes and sins which the Israelites had done before God. Mainly, he refers to three sins – even four. They are:

### **Selling the innocent, needy and poor (vv 6-7)**

### **The rich trampling on the heads of poor (v 7)**

### **Denying justice to the oppressed (v 7)**

These sins are all related to social injustice and include exploiting the poor, treating them in inhuman ways, and preventing oppressed people from finding justice through legal processes. Amos uses a vivid metaphor to explain the exploitation of the poor when he refers to selling the innocent for silver and the needy and a pair of sandals (v 6). He exposes how wealthy Israelites were participating in human trafficking with the Philistines and the Phoenicians (1:6-10).

The rich trampling on the heads of the poor (2:7), uses an image to show how inhuman treatment also captures the powerlessness that is as much a part of poverty as the lack of material goods. The denial of justice for the oppressed is expressed using words that literally mean to 'redirect the way of the oppressed' (2:7).

In the Indian context this may be understood as the corrupt practices that are designed to mislead those who come to the courts or other state agencies for relief. All the actions described in this section create a cycle of total injustice – devaluing the poor, committing physical and psychological violence against them and denying them any possibility of relief or redress (see Isaiah 58:6-12).

Through Amos, God says he will punish the Israelites for their wrong living.

## **The Right Way of Seeking (5:14-15)**

These words emphasise seeking God in the right way, and then doing what is right. In seeking, God requires a strong desire. The Lord's people must be passionate to know him, to follow his good and just ways and then to 'be' his presence in their communities (v 14). As we seek, we need to remember that we will not find the Lord in meaningless religious rituals, but our commitment is to seek goodness, hate evil and pursue justice in society. Matthew 25:31-46 also speaks about the right way of seeking and doing.

If the people of Israel would seek the Lord in the right way, he offers the hope of his mercy to those who remain (v 15). God encourages the Israelites to stop doing wrong and start to do right, and seeking God in the right way is the beginning of doing the right thing.

## **The Right Way of Worshipping (5:21-24)**

Amos writes of the celebrations and their way of worshipping God. God despises their well-planned and enthusiastic worship rituals (v 21). They followed completely all the requirements of the Law in their worship and offerings (v 22), they sang and played music in praise of him (v 23), but we can see God shutting his eyes so as to ignore them. He despised and rejected their worship because it did not match how they were living. Worship is sometimes misunderstood as a way to get God to act powerfully on our behalf, but this is not the purpose of worship. This is seen clearly if we look at who Jesus says will go to Heaven. Sadly, some people's expectations will be unfulfilled (see Luke 6:46-47).

Biblically, worship is always a response of gratitude and obedience – it is never a means to manipulate the divine. We should not expect God to reward us with riches for simply worshipping him as he deserves. The disobedient people of Israel were trying to manipulate God by their show of religion, but God demands the covenanted obedience of his people to live in a just and righteous way (5:24). The metaphor of water and streams suggests an oasis where it is pleasant to live. God wants to see the most dynamic and consistent expression of justice and right living.

## **Application**

Our calling is the same as that of Amos: to encourage people to lead a meaningful life by right living, right seeking and right worshipping. Our mission is the same as Jesus gave to his disciples (Luke 4:18). We are called to follow in his steps. We should work to release the oppressed by delivering them from physical captivity, breaking the chains of shame, fear or embarrassment and welcoming them with love.

Our responsibility is to offer people physical, emotional and spiritual freedom. We must reach out to them with the news that God can bless them with new identities, a future of hope and eternal life.

## **Relevance to human trafficking**

Selling the innocent and needy, and exploiting the poor are aspects of human trafficking that God detests. He also dislikes it when we worship without meaning. Only true worship demonstrated by the way we live is acceptable to him. God expects his children to live lives of righteousness and justice, to bring justice to all, especially the poor and oppressed. Living such a life is true worship and pleases God.