When Religion Turns Bad Amos 5: 18-24

**Intro**: But let justice rolls down like waters,

And righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

* Many today think this is a MLK quote. Actually, MLK was quoting one of his favorite writers. He referred to him often, AMOS. Amos 5:24 (“I have a dream” and often)

**Read Amos 5: 18-24**

Amos came with a Message of Judgment and Authority:

The LORD is Sovereign over people and nations. No one is beyond His jurisdiction!

**t/s** – Amos Focus on Two groups/characteristics “at Ease in Zion”

The Wealthy & **The Religious** (often same folks)

 **Note**: On Israel’s Worship established by Jeroboam I

* + Established for Political reasons (Bethel & Dan)
	+ Jeroboam fell to the great temptation of political leaders. He Traded, “*the Lord will use me*” for “*I will use the Lord.*”
	+ Calf (image); festivals held early; familiar rituals; false priesthood; compromised updated theology!
	+ ***Purpose*** = Make Israel feel good about Israel.

Amos confronts this empty, contrived, consumer-driven Religion.

***Religion can be Deceptive and Detrimental to your Spiritual Health.***

Religion is Toxic when It…

**Insulates the Heart from Fear** (18-20)

**Exp** – The religious people of Israel lived with False Security.

 “***Day of the LORD***” = Dramatic intervention of LORD to

 Defeat His enemies and bless His people.

* They assumed they were His friends; in reality, enemies!
* *A Day of Darkness, not Light; Gloom, not brightness*.

Like a man who runs from Lion, then bear… Then Snake bit at home!

**ILL** – John the Baptist and Jesus worked to shake people out of the slumber of false Security built on religious identity and activity

 “*Don’t go saying we have Abraham for our father*!!”

**App** – Security is wonderful gift from God, unless it is False Security.

 Religious background; ritual or family link…

***Life-changing encounter with Jesus***!

**t/s** – *Religion is Toxic when It*…

**Substitutes Religious Activity for Righteousness** (21-23)

Exp – Notice the aggressive first person verbs. LORD is fired up!

* Religious Holidays; Multiplied Offerings; Music
* As God Spoke, they responded with increased Religious Ritual… **Amos 4:4-5**

**Ill** – John Steinbeck, East of Eden, of Mrs. Edwards

 *She spent a great part of her time with the* ***mechanics of her***

 ***Church****, which did not leave her time for either its background*

 *or its effects.*

* Back ground=Theology; Effects =Impact on community

**App** –The people of 8th C. Israel were exceeding religious, AND

 Corrupt at the core.

**t/s** – What is Righteousness? Look at the crescendo verse!

**Amos 5:24** Religion Is Toxic when it …

**Separates Righteousness from Relationships**

Exp - Disconnection between Worship and How we Treat People!

* Dry stream bed in Amos’s part of Judah, steep mountains.

(Flash Flood of Justice

* **Justice = Righteousness** = *Fairness for the weak; Dignity for the poor; compassion for those in need*.
* **If Justice doesn’t come from YOU, it will come from LORD!**

**ILL** – MLK, jr. arrested in Birmingham 54 years ago…

 Eight White Ministers letter to editor, “***A Call for Unity***”

 King was branded an ***outsider*** and an ***Extremist***.

 King’s letter in response… Amos was both!!

 *Was not* *[Amos](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/resources/article/annotated_letter_from_birmingham/%22%20%5Cl%20%22amos) an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

When Worship does not compel us to treat people Right, it is empty and maybe even offensive to the Lord.

Jesus was asked to sum up all the Law in prophets with One

Great Rule:

 ***Love the LORD with all your heart, soul and mind.***

 ***Love your neighbor as your self!***

The tell-tale sign of Empty, false religion is a claim to Love God, while neglecting to love People, especially those in need.

**T/S** – Great Caution of the gospel story, especially Passion Week:

 The bad guys are the religious ones

 Not all --- Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea…

 Stay Humble and Fix your Hope of Jesus…

At the age of 82, Newton said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner — and that Christ is a great Savior!"