

“There Is More Love Somewhere”  
November 17, 2019  
St. Paul’s UCC Church  
Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy

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

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of King Uzziah of Judah and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake. And he said: The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds wither, and the top of Carmel dries up. Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said. Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

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**SONG: “There is More Love Somewhere”**

*There is more love somewhere. There is more love somewhere.*

*We’re gonna keep on, ‘til we find it. There is more love somewhere.*

1: Today we are reading from a prophet by the name of Amos. Last week, we heard from the prophet Hosea, who prophesized to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, right as Israel was about to be overtaken by the powerful Assyrian Empire.

2: Well, the prophet Amos – who we read today – was born in the *Southern* Kingdom, in a little town south of Bethlehem. But it seems he did most of his prophesying in the Northern Kingdom, where Hosea was. Anyway, he’s the oldest of the prophets that wrote stuff down.

MB: That’s great to know! But before we go any further, can someone remind us what a prophet is?

3: A prophet is a person who tells the truth about what is really going on in the world.

4: A prophet is someone who looks around, notices where there is injustice and unfairness, and talks about it.

MB: And...what’s injustice?

5: Injustice is when things are not right, when we treat each other badly.

6: For example, when rich people keep getting richer, and poor people keep getting poorer, that's injustice.

MB: That's right. So, to review: a prophet is someone who would look around, see these injustices – like how poor some people are while others are so rich – a prophet would see these things, and say something about it. A prophet would tell the truth, even though a lot of times, most people don't want to hear the truth.

**SONG: “There Is More Justice Somewhere”**

*There is more justice somewhere. There is more justice somewhere.*

*We're gonna keep on, 'til we find it. There is more justice somewhere.*

7: Prophets keep telling us what the song says: that there is more love and more justice that is available to us.

8: But most people don't want to hear that, because it usually means we have to change something in order to get there. And most of us would rather stay comfortable.

9: That's probably why a prophet like Amos would not have been very popular. Prophets hardly ever are. Scholars have figured out that Amos was only preaching and prophesizing for something like two years. His time was so short. ...I wonder if he was killed for what he said.

10: That's sad.

11: Very sad.

12: But I can see why Amos made people so mad, especially when he says things like: “I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.”

13: Or, “Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.”

14: Yeah, that's pretty intense.

15: It seems like Amos is saying that God hates our worship. Woah! If that's true, than what are we even doing here??

16: Well, we probably should keep in mind what we were bringing up a little bit ago, that prophets are always looking around, and telling the truth about what they are seeing. I bet Amos was seeing a lot of injustice all around him.

MB: That's right. He was. He saw a lot of rich people taking advantage of a lot of poor people.

17: So I bet he's saying that, when we worship God, but don't treat other people well, then God doesn't like that.

18: Yeah, like, we can sing all the songs and pray all the prayers we want, but if we're not treating our neighbors with justice and kindness, then God would rather us just be quiet.

MB: I think you're right.

19: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." These words sound familiar, like I've heard them before.

20: Martin Luther King?

MB: Yeah! Martin Luther King often quoted the prophet Amos when he preached during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Martin Luther King, like Amos, looked around the world he lived in, and he saw injustice everywhere. He saw Black children having to drink from a different fountain than the White children drank from. He saw Black folks not able to eat from the same counters as White folks. He saw all this, Martin Luther King did, and he preached about it. He preached it was wrong.

21: And he was killed for what he did.

22: Remember: prophets aren't popular.

**SONG: "There Is More Love Somewhere"** (*prayerfully*)

23: Hm. I wonder how we are supposed to hear Amos' words today? I mean, what injustice should we be focusing on, in order to find that higher love that is somewhere out there?

24: I know an example of injustice that hits close to home. Did you know that 1 out of 5 children right here in Iowa don't have enough to eat?<sup>1</sup> 1 out of 5 children in our own state go to bed hungry.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: <http://star1025.com/combathunger/hunger-in-iowa-the-facts/>.

25: That seems wrong.

24: It is wrong! And it seems like the prophet Amos, or any prophet for that matter, would notice that injustice, and call people to do something about it.

MB: Well, the cool thing about being the church is that we are called to continue the prophetic tradition. In other words, prophets don't have to necessarily be one single person. A whole church can act like a prophet, telling the truth about injustice and unkindness in the world. And a whole church can do something about it.

25: Like, maybe, we could give some of our money to places like the Food Bank of Iowa, or to DMARC (which stands for Des Moines Area Religious Council). They do great work helping to feed some of Iowa's hungry families and children.

26: And right here in Madrid, we have our Greater Love Ministries. Our church often supports the work of Greater Love, which helps feed hungry people, too.

MB: Those are great ways to respond to injustice in the world!

27: There are other ways, too. Ways that might take us a little more out of our comfort zones, like going to a local shelter or soup kitchen in Des Moines and helping serve food there.

28: Or maybe even something like going on a mission trip to a poor area of the country or world, and getting to know the people there, and building real relationships with them.

MB: Yes, yes, yes. To be a prophetic church, we are called to do all these things, and more. But the first thing we have to do is pay attention to the world. Where are people hurting? Where are people hungry? Where are people abused? Where are people crying out? It's so easy to become numb to this, but as the church – called into the same tradition as someone like Amos – our mission is continue to pay attention to all of the injustice in the world, and to tell the truth about it.

29: That doesn't sound easy.

MB: It's not. But we don't have to do it alone. We can be a community of prophets, a church formed in the prophetic tradition. A church that stands for justice, and mercy, and love for *all* people. And we can do it together.

30: Uh oh!! I feel a song coming on...

31: How about something from the Civil Rights Movement that Dr. King was a part of?

MB: Great idea!

**SONG: “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize”**

*Paul and Silas were bound in jail/ Had no money for to go to bail.  
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on./ Paul and Silas began to shout,  
Jail door opened and they walked right out.  
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.*

*Hold on, hold on./ Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.*

*Freedom’s name is mighty sweet,/ Soon one day we’re gonna meet.  
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.*

*I got my hand on the Gospel plow, /Won’t take nothing for my journey now.  
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.*

*Hold on, hold on./ Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.*

All: Thanks be to God!