

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 8, 2023

SCRIPTURE

AMOS 5:1-17

1 Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel:

2 Fallen, no more to rise,
is maiden Israel;
forsaken on her land,
with no one to raise her up.

3 For thus says the Lord GOD:
The city that marched out a thousand
shall have a hundred left,
and that which marched out a hundred
shall have ten left.

4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:

Seek me and live;

5 but do not seek Bethel,

and do not enter into Gilgal

or cross over to Beer-sheba;

for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,

and Bethel shall come to nothing.

6 Seek the LORD and live,

or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,

and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

7 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,

and bring righteousness to the ground!

8 The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,

and turns deep darkness into the morning,

and darkens the day into night,

who calls for the waters of the sea,

and pours them out on the surface of the earth,

the LORD is his name,

9 who makes destruction flash out against the strong,

so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

10 They hate the one who reproves in the gate,

and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

11 Therefore because you trample on the poor

and take from them levies of grain,

you have built houses of hewn stone,

but you shall not live in them;

you have planted pleasant vineyards,

but you shall not drink their wine.

12 For I know how many are your transgressions,

and how great are your sins

you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,

and push aside the needy in the gate.

13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;

for it is an evil time.

14 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.

15 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.

16 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord:

In all the squares there shall be wailing;

and in all the streets they shall say, "Alas! alas!"

They shall call the farmers to mourning,

and those skilled in lamentation, to wailing;

17 in all the vineyards there shall be wailing,

for I will pass through the midst of you,

says the LORD.

DEVOTION

The Rev. Dr. Kimberly D. Russaw, Associate Professor of Old Testament

Years ago, Throw Back Thursday (#TBT) went viral on social media. On Thursdays people used to post their awkward grammar school photos, pictures of their laughable high school hair styles, and reminisce about their youthful sports accomplishments. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter timelines were full of these self-deprecating images, as #TBT became a light-hearted way for people to put their imperfections on display for their virtual community. But people never posted images of them breaking laws, engaging in morally questionable behavior, or committing acts of violence on #TBT. Nobody

shared their miserable failures, embarrassing mistakes, or poor life decisions on #TBT.

Have you ever made such a colossal mess of things that you wanted to make yourself invisible? Have you ever been entrusted with an assignment that you botched so badly that all you could do is hope time would make others forget about your transgression? It is one thing to mess up, but it is another thing to mess up publicly.

As Christians, we try, but we do not always get it right. Often we lament our own thoughts and actions. And when we fail to live into the life of faith, grace, and mercy, the words of the prophet Amos offer us hope during Advent season. Even when we have committed grievous acts, have mistreated others, or have been disparaged and punished for acting unjustly, there is hope in the midst of the lament. In the same way biblical Israel should seek the Lord and “seek good and not evil” (v. 14), so should we. We can seek to establish justice. We can change. We can do better. And the Lord will be gracious to us. There is hope in the idea that our Creator is gracious.

PRAYER

Gracious God, we have not always gotten it right. Our thoughts, our words, and our deeds have not always aligned with your vision for our life. We are saddened by how our acts and the very remembrance of them grieves us. We seek good and not evil. We seek justice and not wrong. Have mercy on us. Forgive us. Be gracious unto us. Amen.

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



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