

Lent Devotional February 18, 2026

Scripture

Amos 5:6-15

*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.*

Devotion

The Rev. James Wimberly III '19/'24

Hope: Certain or Uncertain

Amos served as a prophet in the Northern Kingdom during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. Unfortunately, Israel's hope was directly bound to their prosperity, so much so that it led them into a state of moral and spiritual depravity. As a result, the prophet Amos admonished them to turn from their depraved condition, return to the LORD, worship him, and put their hope in the LORD. He warned them that if they did not return to the LORD, judgment would be the result. For it is wise to return to the path of righteousness, rather than to test the waters of consequence in rebellion.

Hope is an often-overlooked aspect of our Christian lives. Hope comes in various contexts. There is the hope of wishing, which is a state of uncertainty, relying on a measure of chance. Then there is the hope of knowing: a state of certainty, a confident expectation, and source of motivation. Israel placed its hope in prosperity rather than certainty; when economic prosperity faded, their hope diminished as well.

Those of us whose hope is in Jesus Christ have a sure hope of knowing that he is our Lord and Savior, not a hope built on earthly riches. We can learn a lot from this passage. The conditions then are terribly similar to those today. The rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. The judicial system is used to further benefit the rich.

As we observe Ash Wednesday and enter the Lenten season, let us prepare to commemorate Christ's love-unto-death. It is an opportunity to heed the appeal of the prophet Amos to repent, seek the Lord, return to him, and worship him only. Is your hope built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness?

Prayer

Father, thank you for being a loving God, full of grace and mercy. Thank you for being a longsuffering and patient God. Thank you for the greatest expression of love toward us: that You gave Your only begotten Son for us. You loved us so much that, even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Thank you for setting up a system so that if we sin, we can confess our sin, acknowledge our wrongdoing, and ask for Your forgiveness. So, as we observe Ash Wednesday and enter this Lenten season, let us do so in self-examination, deep reflection, a heart of repentance, and a heart to love You, serve You, and worship You more. In Jesus' name, amen.