

Mon., Nov. 28, 2011

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Scripture

Amos 2:6-16

⁶Thus says the LORD:

For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals —

⁷they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,
and push the afflicted out of the way;
father and son go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned;

⁸they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge;
and in the house of their God they drink
wine bought with fines they imposed.

⁹Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them,
whose height was like the height of cedars,
and who was as strong as oaks;
I destroyed his fruit above,
and his roots beneath.

¹⁰Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt,
and led you forty years in the wilderness,
to possess the land of the Amorite.

¹¹And I raised up some of your children to be prophets
and some of your youths to be nazirites.
Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?
says the LORD.

¹²But you made the nazirites drink wine,
and commanded the prophets,
saying, "You shall not prophesy."

¹³So, I will press you down in your place,
just as a cart presses down
when it is full of sheaves.

¹⁴Flight shall perish from the swift,
and the strong shall not retain their strength,

nor shall the mighty save their lives;
¹⁵those who handle the bow shall not stand,
and those who are swift of foot shall not save themselves,
nor shall those who ride horses save their lives;
¹⁶and those who are stout of heart among the mighty
shall flee away naked in that day,
says the LORD.

Devotional

Advent is a season of hope and expectancy but also a time to reflect on the darkness and suffering that Jesus came to confront. Through Amos, God delivers an impassioned condemnation of eighth century Israel that anticipates themes of Jesus' ministry and that resonates today.

In the verses that precede this passage, Amos pronounces God's judgment against Judah for its faithlessness and against the nations, each for a single brutal crime against its enemies. At 2:6, the prophet turns abruptly to the Israelites to condemn seven day-to-day abuses of the powerless - practices that deprive the Israelite poor of the most basic necessities to enrich those who have no need. These abuses are not the overt as the sins of the nations, but they inflict suffering, tear at the fabric of Israelite society and defy the requirement for justice at the heart of the Sinai covenant.

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for this season of reflection. As we prepare to welcome your Son, open our minds and hearts to your yearning for justice. Amen.