

Opening Prayer (Facilitator)

UMC Discipleship Ministries offers [Praying for Change: Daily Prayers for Anti-Racism](#) as a resource for prayer.

Scriptural Passage:

Amos 5: 10- 15

"There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth. You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain.

Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them;

though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.

For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil.

Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.

Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

Meditation:

Amos is known for the harsh words he has for the people of Israel. This passage is just a sampling of the prophetic critique he offers for their behavior. Their many sins include taking advantage of people in poverty, oppressing innocent people, and courts that don't deliver justice. Two particular criticisms stand out as we prepare for today's video:

"There are those who...detest the one who tells the truth."

"Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil."

Those who benefitted from the injustice of the day despised those who would tell the truth about it. It became prudent, then, to keep quiet and refrain from naming the evils that were all around. Presumably, the consequences for truth-telling would be painful for those who dared to challenge the rich and powerful. Until, along comes Amos, who bursts the enabling bubble of silence and bluntly and boldly tells the people of Israel about their sins.

In much the same way, American racism has benefitted from silence, from a feeling that it is better not to stir things up, or challenge the status quo. And like Amos, the civil rights movement sought to burst the bubble of silence that surrounded southern segregation and to name loudly for the world how evil the treatment was of Black folks. And the blowback, the response from the powerful, was predictably violent, trying to reimpose the unjust order of the day and punish those who would speak the truth.

Today we ponder the role the church should play in truth-telling: about the sinfulness of our past and present. About our complicity in the injustices of our society. We pray for the boldness of Amos to name our collective sins, and encourage us to “hate evil, love good.”

Video: Bloody Monday in Danville

Discussion questions:

1. “It wasn’t something you discussed, it was just there.” - Carolyn Wilson on segregation. What has been your personal experience in talking honestly about difficult subjects? Did you grow up in a family that openly discussed injustices?
2. Are there *historic* injustices in your community that people hesitate to acknowledge, discuss, and make amends for?
3. What are the *current* issues in your own community that people seem to accept but that seem wrong to you?

Ideas for action:

1. Without acknowledgement of the past there can be no healing: Discover and promote the work of those people and institutions who are acknowledging the painful histories present in your community.
2. Of the current issues you named in the discussion before, are there any you could become involved with?
3. Find the people in your community who are working on such issues. Are there faith leaders, as there were in the civil rights movement, who are pointing the way?

Closing Prayer

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