

Sunday, December 13, 2015

“Jesus and Our Longing for Justice”

Third in the Series, “Light in the Darkness: Jesus and our Deepest Longings”

Steve Watson

What the prophets teach us at Christmastime:

1. God sees and feels and responds to our longings and our needs.
2. God is both smaller and bigger than we’d tend to assume.
3. God sees our half-baked coping mechanisms and tells us we’re full of it.
4. God calls us to return to the healthy, sound, integrated lives that make everyone happy.
5. We want a God who’s fed-up angry but also patient and good; apparently, we have both.

Gifts to Give and Receive in a Broken World

1. Lament – grieve what looks brutal and wrong to you.
2. Restore – act for what’s right when it’s in your power.
3. Treasure – praise God for the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Amos 4:1-5 (NLT)

Listen to me, you fat cows living in Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, and who are always calling to your husbands, “Bring us another drink!”² The Sovereign LORD has sworn this by his holiness: “The time will come when you will be led away with hooks in your noses. Every last one of you will be dragged away like a fish on a hook!³ You will be led out through the ruins of the wall; you will be thrown from your fortresses,” says the LORD.⁴ “Go ahead and offer sacrifices to the idols at Bethel. Keep on disobeying at Gilgal. Offer sacrifices each morning, and bring your tithes every three days.⁵ Present your bread made with yeast as an offering of thanksgiving. Then give your extra voluntary offerings so you can brag about it everywhere! This is the kind of thing you Israelites love to do,” says the Sovereign LORD.

Amos 5:21-24 (NLT)

“I hate all your show and pretense—the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies.²² I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings. I won’t even notice all your choice peace offerings.²³ Away with your noisy hymns of praise! I will not listen to the music of your harps.²⁴ Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living.

Amos 7:1-3 (NLT)

⁷ The Sovereign LORD showed me a vision. I saw him preparing to send a vast swarm of locusts over the land. This was after the king’s share had been harvested from the fields and as the main crop was coming up.² In my vision the locusts ate every green plant in sight. Then I said, “O Sovereign LORD, please forgive us or we will not survive, for Israel is so small.”³ So the LORD relented from this plan. “I will not do it,” he said.

John 11:33-35 (NLT)

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled.³⁴ “Where have you put him?” he asked them. They told him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Then Jesus wept.

John 2:14-15 (NLT)

In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵ Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables.

John 12:1-8 (NLT)

Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. ² A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. ³ Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, ⁵ "That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor." ⁶ Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself. ⁷ Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."