

## A call to repentance

**Vision:** to realise that, unless we are caring for those in need and bringing justice, no amount of worship or sermons will be acceptable to God.

### **Amos 5:11-15; 21-24**

#### **Questions to discuss:**

*Context: God sends Israel a message through the prophet Amos*

1. Who is speaking in this passage in Amos and who are they speaking to?
2. What is Israel doing in this passage that makes God angry?
3. Do any of these things happen in our community? Give as specific examples as possible (for example, looking at verse 11, where do we see the rich using their power to take from the poor in our community?)
4. What words does God use to describe the Israelites' 'religious festivals' (which, for us, would be church services)?
5. What do you think God would say to our church right now about how we have responded to the needs in our community?
6. What does God command us to do so that our worship is acceptable to Him?

**Act of Love:** remind participants of their answer to question 3, the things that make God angry in their community, and choose one action to take on as a group or church.

#### **Going deeper:**

Bring something that smells beautiful and smells horrible (e.g. a flower and a food compost bin). How does the smell of each make us feel and react? Use these to brainstorm what sort of worship smells beautiful to God and what is a stench.

**Notes for facilitator:** see over page

**Notes for facilitator:**

- *God is speaking to Israel through the prophet Amos.*
- *Israel has made God angry by using power to take more money from the poor (taxes); oppressing the innocent; using bribes to win cases in court.*
- *God describes the people as a 'stench'.*
- *It is not that God does not want sung worship, but that he only wants it if we are also doing justice.*

We must work with the most vulnerable in our community to ensure that they can speak up for themselves, partner with others and advocate for their own rights - this is worship to God.

As the passage shows, often the root causes of poverty are acts of injustice committed by other humans. Human beings exploit one another at a community level and at a global level and it is always hardest for the most vulnerable to access justice. Many of the examples in the passage still occur today: being part of a system where those in poverty have to pay proportionally more tax; oppressing the innocent in terrible working conditions or through arbitrary arrests; using bribes to win cases in court

The passage is clear that sung worship, prayer and celebrating God together are valuable to Him, but only if we are also doing justice.