# *Amos*
## *Chapter 5*

*Seek the LORD and Live*

**Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel: 2 "Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel; forsaken on her land, with none to raise her up." 3 For thus says the Lord GOD:"The city that went out a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went out a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel." 4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:"Seek me and live; 5 but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing." 6 Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel, 7 O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth! 8 He 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 forth against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress. 10 They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. 11 Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell 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 turn aside the needy in the gate. 13 Therefore he who is 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, 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. 16 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord: "In all the squares there shall be wailing, and in all the streets they shall say, 'Alas! Alas!' They shall call the farmers to mourning and to wailing those who are skilled in lamentation, 17 and in all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through your midst," says the LORD.**

**5:1** *in lamentation.* Amos sorrowfully fashioned a lament as if Israel were already dead. (CSB)

Hebrew qinah, a rhythmic dirge (vv 1-3). Such songs of mourning were especially associated with death and were sometimes sung by professional mourners (v 16; Jer 9:17). By intoning this dirge in their hearing, the prophet effectively tells the people of the Northern Kingdom that their nation is doomed. (TLSB)

**5:2** *no more to rise.*Assyrians will attack and finally conquer Israel in 722 BC. Once deported by the victors, the survivors of Israel will never return and thus become the famous 10 lost tribes of Israel. (TLSB)

*Virgin Israel.* Though the nation ought to be the flower of its youth and vitality, it is destined to remain unfulfilled, separated from the bridegroom by tragedy. (TLSB)

*forsaken.* Left like a dead body on the open field (cf. Jer 9:22). (CSB)

Stretched out upon her soil, by a violent overthrow. (Kretzmann)

**5:3** *city.* The Hebrew expression denotes communities of varying size, all of which would suffer. (CSB)

Israel will suffer overwhelming defeat and be left shattered. Here is the reason for the condition described in v. 2. (TLSB)

*house of Israel*. Phrase both begins and ends the dirge in vv 1–3, a device to round out the lament. (TLSB)

**5:4** *Seek.* God's longing has been unfulfilled (4:6, 8, 10–11). The Lord is long-suffering and compassionate (Ex 34:6; Ps 86:15). Whenever sin increases, His grace abounds all the more (Rm 5:20). Further tragedy can still be averted through repentance, which is why this refrain is repeated in vv 6, 14. (TLSB)

In sincere worship of the one true God, and ye shall live. (Kretzmann)

*live.* If they would seek the Lord, they (or at least a remnant, v. 15) could yet escape the violent death anticipated in Amos's lament. (CSB)

**5:5** *Bethel … Gilgal … Beersheba*. Centers of blasphemous worship in Amos's day. Note also the literary arrangement: Bethel-Gilgal-Beersheba-Gilgal-Bethel. This chiasm emphasizes Bethel as a prime target of the Lord's wrath. (TLSB)

*Beersheba.* Located in the south of Judah, it also had evidently become a place of pilgrimage and idolatry (cf. 8:14). All shrines where the worship of God was abused would be destroyed. (CSB)

*exile*. Israel would not go down to defeat while defending its borders. Rather, the people ended up fallen and forsaken on their own land (v 2), with the survivors shamefully deported to foreign lands. (TLSB)

**5:5-6, 10-15** The eighth century BC was a time of great danger for Israel and Judah because they had forsaken the Lord their God. The Assyrians were growing in power and military might and were threatening both the North and the South. Corruption and idolatry were rampant in the land, and as a result, the Northern Kingdom of Israel (here called "Joseph" for the forefather of the kingdom's prominent tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh) was called to repentance. Prophets were sent by God to speak to his people, but their message was not heard and believed. Ultimately, both kingdoms would fall—the North to Assyria in 721 BC and the South to Babylon, who destroyed the Lord's temple in 587 BC. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Even in these dismal times, and throughout history, as recorded in the pages of Holy Scripture, God demonstrates his care for the oppressed and disenfranchised and calls on his people to offer their own care, support, and protection for them. These are the acts of mercy enjoined upon the Church also today. To remain silent in the face of evil is to participate in that evil and thus to betray the God who has created us and called us to be his own. Jesus, as the incarnate God, lived his life in ministry to the sick, the poor, the tax collectors—all those on the outer rims of society. To serve God is to reach out to those who are far from the center of society, for "Truly, I say to you," our Lord tells us, "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

It is a matter of living out what we have been made to be by God himself. We plead for justice and receive none from this fallen world. Nor do we deserve justice. Yet God provides exactly that by pouring out all of his wrath not upon Israel or on us but upon his own Son at Calvary. In him, the Lord God of hosts is indeed with us and we with him. As the Son dies on the cross, we die. As he rises on Easter, we rise. Here is mercy for those who know no other mercy—mercy that washes our sin away in the water

with the Word and then continues to sustain us with his forgiveness, love, and grace in the Blessed Sacrament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**5:6** *seek* - The imperative "seek the LORD" (*dirshu*) calls Israel back to who they actually are, the people of God. The verb "seek" (*drsh*) is used primarily in cultic practice as the God of Israel demands that his people seek only him. All else is worship of gods that do not exist and cannot help them. Failure to "seek the Lord" so will result in the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (here represented by the "house of Joseph"—that is, his descendants in Manasseh and Ephraim, the dominant tribes of the North). So complete will be the destruction of the North that no one will be available to quench the fire at their main sanctuary in Bethel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

The places of idolatry were doomed; yet if Israel turned to God, there was hope for her as a nation. Otherwise the people, too, would be destroyed. (CSB)

*house of Joseph.* The northern kingdom of Israel, dominated by the tribe of Ephraim, descendants of Joseph (also in v. 15; 6:6). (CSB)

*devour*. Nothing will be able to extinguish the fiery judgment coming upon Israel, for it comes from the Lord Himself. (TLSB)

*Bethel.* The main religious center of the northern kingdom (see 7:13; see also 3:14; 4:4; 7:10). The god the Israelites worshiped there would be powerless to save the place when the true God brought his judgment. (CSB)

**5:7** *wormwood*. Bitter plant with a repulsive taste. Accordingly, it represents sorrow (Pr 5:4; Lm 3:15). Once again, Amos rails against the prevalent injustice of his day, esp the abuse of the poor (cf 2:7–8; 3:10; 4:1). (TLSB)

*turn justice to wormwood.* They corrupted the procedures and institutions of justice (the courts), making them instruments of injustice ("bitterness"). Turning God's order upside down is inevitable in a society that ignores his law and despises true religion (see 6:12). (CSB)

Justice (*mishpat*) is to be practiced throughout the nation especially on behalf of the poor and powerless. Israel is said to turn (*hahopəkim*, "turn, overturn") justice to "wormwood", i.e., bitterness (see 6:12). A false worship of God (v 6) has implications beyond discrete moments of worship; it infects the entire life of the people. Justice becomes bitterness and righteousness ( *tsədakah*) is cast down. Contrast this to the Lord himself, who turns (*tsalmavet*) darkness into light (vv 8–9). Note: vv 8–9 form a parenthetical remark between v 7 and v 10. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**5:8–9** As in 4:13, a brief hymn is inserted (see 9:5–6). Here Amos highlights the contrast between "you who turn" good into bad (v. 7) and the One "who turns" night into day and governs the order of the universe—and whose power can smash the walls his people hide behind. (CSB)

Doxology of judgment. (TLSB)

**5:8** *Pleiades.* A group of seven stars (part of the constellation Taurus); always mentioned in connection with Orion. (CSB)

Pair of constellations. (TLSB)

*darkness into morning… day into night.* The orderly sequence of day and night (cf. Jer 31:35). (CSB)

*waters of the sea.* The waters above the expanse (see 9:6; Ge 1:7; see also notes on Ps 36:8; 42:7; 104:3, 13); alternatively, waters evaporated from the sea and condensed as rain. (CSB)

The Lord governs light and darkness, creates the seas, and pours them out whenever He wishes. (TLSB)

**5:9** *flash forth*. As suddenly and powerfully as lightning bursts forth in the heavens, so also the Lord can send destruction against those who oppose Him and His will. Lightning was associated with God's holiness as revealed at Sinai (Ex 20:18). (TLSB)

**5:10** Continues the sentence begun in v. 7. This poetic paragraph is continued and completed in vv. 12b–13, which (in the Hebrew) use the third person, while the preceding passage (vv. 11–12a) uses the second person. The indictment of vv. 7, 10, 12b–13 is therefore more objective and descriptive, while that of vv. 11–12a is more direct and pointed. (CSB)

The prophet here switches from the second person to the third person in order to objectively describe the prevailing injustice in Israel. The gate (*sha'ar*) of the city (also mentioned in v 12) is where one might come to have his case heard and receive justice (the *shapat* of v 7; see Job 29:7). But there the failure of Israel to "seek the Lord" (v 6) is manifested in the hatred of the one who reproves them and the abominating of the one who "speaks the truth" (or, more literally, the "plain speaker," *dober tamim*). A corrupt people cannot abide anyone who directly speaks the truth without concern for "political correctness," ancient or modern. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*reproves … tells the truth.* Those who are concerned that the courts uphold justice. (CSB)

*abhor him who speaks the truth*. Dishonest oppressors naturally loathed those who dared contradict or expose them. Luther: "Wickedness cannot bear sound doctrine" (AE 18:161). (TLSB)

**5:11** Note the change from the indefinite "They" in v 10 to the accusation "you" in vv 11–12—this becomes a pointed, personal rebuke. (TLSB)

*trample* - Amos now returns to the direct speech of the second person plural—"you trample" (*boshaskem*) and "you exact" (*tikhu*) taxes. These injustices are committed against the poor, who have no power or resources to defend themselves. Because you have built stone houses (stone was a construction material indicating wealth) and planted vineyards funded by your exploitation of others, you will be denied residence in those houses and the luxury of the produce of the vineyard. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*taxes of grain*. Taxes were one way the poor were exploited rather than protected (cf Lv 25:35–37; Dt 23:19). (TLSB)

*him*. The poor who actually worked the land. The unrighteous wealthy not only profited from their labor but also imposed unjust taxes on the poor. (TLSB)

*you have built.* God would take away their prized possessions acquired through wrongful gain. Their prosperity would be turned to grief (cf. Dt 28:30, 38–40). (CSB)

*houses of hewn stone*. Expensive homes, associated with royal households. However, Israel will not enjoy the fruit of these ill-gotten gains. (TLSB)

**5:12** *many…transgressions...great...sins* – Outstanding even in the midst of a nation steeped in wickedness. (Kretzmann)

*turn aside the needy* – The poor were without champions of their right and were obliged to bow to the mighty, a condition which still prevails almost universally. (Kretzmann)

Here the imagery of the gate of the city (v 10) returns—and the prophet explicitly and pointedly ("you") condemns the turning aside of the needy (*'ebyonim*), that is, the poor and oppressed. This, compounded with afflicting the righteous and taking bribes, is condemned with the intensified compounding of two words: "transgressions" (*pish'ekem*) and "sin" (*chatotekem*). Of these, the prophet, speaking for the Lord, states, "I know . . ." The oppression of human beings and the suppression of justice do not escape the attention of the God of Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*needy in the gate*. The poor bring lawsuits in order to protect their rights and so secure justice. Notice how vv 10–12 begin and end with references to legal proceedings at the city gate. (TLSB)

**5:13** *prudent.* He knows he cannot change the state of affairs, and therefore only awaits judgment. (CSB)

When things have reached such extremities as here pictured, all admonitions are futile. Still the love of the prophet for his people and his desire to further their welfare in every possible way causes him to address them once more. (Kretzmann)

*kept silent* - Therefore, the prophet continues, the "prudent" (ESV) will keep silent. The LXX translates the Hebrew *hammasbil* with the participle *sunion*, both meaning to "understand" or "comprehend"; thus, the translation "prudent." The idea here is not so much prudence as wisdom, but rather as understanding and recognizing the realities of an evil time. Such prudence motivates not action but silence in the face of evil. Contrast this self-preserving and self-serving silence with what happens when one "reproves in the gate" and "speaks the truth"; such people are "hated" and "abhorred" (v 10). These are the two options, then, in the face of evil: either the "prudence" of silence or else giving a voice to those who have no voice. Which results in the blessing of God? This the prophet will answer in vv 14–15. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*It is an evil time.* Unbridled wickedness forced the wise into resigned silence. Pressing for justice seemed futile and even dangerous. (TLSB)

**5:14-15** These verses should be considered together, because here the prophet points to the change that must occur. The verb *drsh*, "seek," was used in v 6 with the Lord as the object (*dirshu* et *YHWH*); here it is used with "good" (*tob*) rather than evil (*ra'*) in the midst of an "evil time" (*'et ra 'ah*; v 13). How is this done? Through the polar opposite of the prevailing culture of injustice and oppression: "Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate." Indeed, one must speak rather than prudently remain silent, but one must also act. Twice God is referred to as "the LORD, the God of hosts" ((*YHWH 'elohe-tesba'ot*) —indeed, a third time as well in v 16). A remnant of the northern tribes ("Joseph") will be preserved by the grace of God even in the face of the coming Assyrian destruction. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**5:14** *Seek good.* Cf. "Seek me" (v. 4); see Isa 1:16–17. (CSB)

*that you may live.* The purpose is more definitely expressed than in vv. 4, 6, and the way to change is explicit. (CSB)

*God of hosts*. This name becomes a refrain (vv 15–16), recurring twice more. (TLSB)

*be with you.* As your security and source of blessing. (CSB)

During the days of the patriarchs, the Lord had made promises to be with people at both Beersheba (Gn 26:24; 46:1–4) and Bethel (Gn 28:15, 19). Incredibly, those showing utter contempt for the Lord and His covenant during Amos's time were still claiming this promise as their own. (TLSB)

**5:15** *establish justice*. Stark contrast to what was happening in Israel. Notice the literary structure of vv 14–15: seek good, not evil/hate evil, love good. (TLSB)

*remnant.* Implies that a change now would benefit the individual survivors of the disaster, though the nation as a whole would perish. (CSB)

These words look beyond the impending destruction of the Northern Kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians and see that a faithful few will be preserved and restored, leaving a mere remnant. Cf Is 10:21–23. Amos's last oracle similarly speaks of God restoring the faithful remnant (9:11–15). (TLSB)

To the few of the northern nation who would be left after the punishment now impending. (Kretzmann)

**5:16–17** A return to the theme of lament with which this section began (vv. 1–2). (CSB)

**5:16** *squares*. City squares or plazas. Destruction and death will be felt throughout, even within the fortified cities. (TLSB)

*farmers*. Rural areas will not be spared; the whole nation will be ruined. (TLSB)

*lamentation*. Hbr *misped*, "beating the breast as a sign of grief, esp for the dead." Such outpouring will be heard everywhere and from everyone, from professional mourners to city dwellers to farmhands in the vineyards. Luther: "So great will the wretchedness be that there will be no one who is not sorry to be alive" (AE 18:163). (TLSB)

**5:17** *pass through*. Echoes a portion of the Passover account, when the Lord "pass[ed] through the land of Egypt … strik[ing] all the firstborn" (Ex 12:12). Ironically, God was punishing Israel's enemy in Ex. God is now threatening to treat His own people as He once treated the Egyptians. (TLSB)

**5:1–17** Amos sings a funeral dirge over impenitent Israel, for the Lord is soon to come in judgment against the nation for abandoning the covenant. The Lord's judgment still threatens all that would place anyone or anything above Him. At the same time, God remains merciful and long-suffering. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather wishes to see the wicked turn from his evil way and live (Ezk 33:11). • "Though great our sins, yet greater still Is God's abundant favor; His hand of mercy never will Abandon us, nor waver. Our shepherd good and true is He, Who will at last His Israel free From all their sin and sorrow." Amen. (*LSB* 607:5) (TLSB)

*Let Justice Roll Down*

**18 Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD?**
**It is darkness, and not light, 19 as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20 Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? 21 "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of**

**your harps I will not listen. 24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. 25 "Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 26 You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyyun your star-god—your images that you made for yourselves, 27 and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.**

**5:18** *day of the LORD.*† The time when God will show himself the victor over the world, vindicating his claims to be the Lord over all the earth (see notes on 8:9; Isa 2:11, 17, 20). Israel wrongly expected to be exalted as a nation and longed for that day to come. Amos warned that the day would come, but not as Israel expected—it would be a day of "darkness, not light" (v. 20) for her, because she had not been faithful to God. (Cf. "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" and variations in 1Co 1:8; 3:12–15; 5:5; 2Co 1:14; Php 1:6, 10; 2:16.) Amos speaks primarily of an imminent and decisive judgment on Israel, not exclusively of the last day. (CSB)

Likely refers to the day in which God will allow Israel's enemies to attack and destroy the northern tribes and then take them into exile. (TLSB)

*darkness, and not light*. There will be disaster, not salvation, for Israel. (TLSB)

**5:19–20** The two pictures (v. 19) emphasize vividly the inescapability of God's coming judgment. (CSB)

**5:19** A pair of similes portrays things going from bad to worse, like "jumping out of the frying pan into the fire." Israel's condemnation is now inevitable. (TLSB)

**5:20** *Is not …?* The expected affirmative answer to this rhetorical question reinforces the "woe" just pronounced in v 18. (TLSB)

*darkness … gloom*. See note, v 18. Repetition of "day of the LORD" and "darkness" leave no doubt about Israel's sad outcome. (TLSB)

Full of tribulation and misery; the day of the Lord is darkness and not light; it would bring no deliverance to those who trample justice and right beneath their feet. (Kretzmann)

**5:21–27** Again God directly addresses Israel with the charge of unfaithfulness. (CSB)

**5:21–23** These three verses summarize and reject the current practice of religion in Israel. The institutions were not wrong in themselves; it was the worshipers and the ways they worshiped that were wrong. The people had no basis on which to come to God, because their conduct reflected disobedience of his law. (CSB)

Though Israel may continue to offer the worship described in these verses, it will do no good. Where simple justice and humility are lacking, even the most orthodox ritual and the finest of music is nothing more than a hypocritical sham. Luther: "The wicked do not please the Lord, regardless of how great and splendid their works may be" (AE 18:165). (TLSB)

**5:21** *no delight.* Lit. "I do not inhale with delight." (CSB)

Forceful denunciations of Israel's insincere worship. (TLSB)

*feasts*. The three major festivals required by the Law were Passover, Pentecost, and Booths. (TLSB)

*solemn assemblies*. Likely refers to the prayers and sacrifices offered on a daily and weekly basis. (TLSB)

**5:22** *though you offer* – They still continued to do in their effort to have the Lord accept their outward worship. (Kretzmann)

The Lord rejects all sacrifices offered by those acting righteous but lacking a sincere faith. Cf Mi 6:6–8. (TLSB)

**5:23** *take away from the noise* – Israel's insincere religiosity and its consequent sham worship have become repugnant to God. The nation's supposedly sacred music is nothing more than noise to Him. Without a right relationship to the Lord, attempting to worship is futile. (TLSB)

**5:24** *justice … righteousness.* Prerequisites for acceptance by God; but these are what Israel had rejected and scorned (cf. vv. 7, 10, 12b). (CSB)

God's people are to produce justice continually and swiftly, like the flow of a river. Just as plants and animals need a steady supply of water to survive, so also human communities can flourish only when justice and righteousness prevail. (TLSB)

*ever-flowing stream.* In contrast to stream beds that are dry much of the year. The simile is especially apt: As plant and animal life flourishes where there is water, so human life flourishes where there is justice and righteousness. (CSB)

**5:25** Israel's right relationship with the Lord was never established primarily by sacrifices. It was above all based on obedience (see 1Sa 15:22–23; cf. Ro 1:5). (CSB)

Sacrifice from Israel had never been the basis of its relationship to the Lord. From day one, God's chosen people enjoyed His gifts and protection as a free gift of His grace. (TLSB)

*forty years in the wilderness.* Only after Israel was delivered from Egypt and received the covenant did the people begin to offer God regular sacrifices. Amos insists repentance and a right relationship with God are the only basis for worship. (TLSB)

**5:26** Even in the wilderness the children of Israel, as Ezekiel also shows, did not quite discard their idolatry, but carried their idol-pictures along with them and thus provoked the Lord. (Kretzmann)

*Sikkuth … Kiyyun your star-god*. Deities of Mesopotamia. What folly to worship an imaginary star-god rather than the Creator of "the Pleiades and Orion" (v 8). Note further that Amos alludes to the practice of carrying these deities aloft while marching in religious procession. The punishment for such pagan practice will fit the crime, when Israel is forced to march "into exile beyond Damascus" (v 27). (TLSB)

**5:27** This punishment is the final one—exile from the God-given land to remote foreign places. (CSB)

*beyond Damascus*. God's long-suffering is coming to an end. He will send Israel into exile in a foreign land, never to return. This prediction was fulfilled by the Assyrians (2Ki 17:1–23) in 722 BC. (TLSB)

*Lord...God of hosts* – The last words were employed by Stephen in his powerful rebuke of the Jews after his arrest, Acts 7, 43, in order to show that idolatry had ever been in vogue among the people in spite

of all the efforts of the Lord to stamp it out. The modern idolatry in high places is just as persistent and apparently cares as little for the admonitions and rebukes of the Bible. (Kretzmann)

*God of hosts*. Name appears repeatedly in this chapter (vv 14–16). (TLSB)

TLSB p. 1291 – Moses, Joshua, and Judges never use the title "LORD [God] of hosts." It was first used just before the kingdom period (1Sm 1:3, 11; c 1050 BC) and became a favorite expression for the eighth-century prophets and later writers. It appears c 275 times (often in 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) and presents one of the most important Old Testament pictures of God and His work.

The term "host" (Hbr *tsaba'*; plural noun *tseba'oth*) refers to military service, the ranks and divisions of troops (Jgs 4:2; 2Ch 26:11–15). Though the hosts of the Lord are often angels (1Ki 22:19), they include His people Israel (Nu 1:52; 1Sm 17:45; Is 24:23), the Levites (Nu 4; 8:24–25), the "ministering women" (Ex 38:8; 1Sm 2:22) and, notably, all of creation, which God set in order and continues to rule.

The Lord set His hosts in order so that they might serve Him (cf Jb 28:3; 38:5; 39:6; Ps 19:4–5; 104:9). The Word of God, by which He made all things (Gn 1:3), endures and gives direction to His hosts (Ps 119:89–91). The result is the orderly, natural world in which we live. Every particle, every person, is designed to fulfill a calling that gives the Lord praise (Ps 148; see pp 775–78). Luther wrote:

> God calls Himself the God of the armies or of the hosts, that is, not only of the angels or of the spirits but of the entire creation, which carries on warfare for Him and serves Him.… God created all these creatures to be in active military service. (AE 1:74) (TLSB)

**5:18–27** The people of Israel are living under the delusion that their prosperity is a sign of God's approval and that their perfunctory offering of sacrifices is keeping the Lord satisfied, even though they act unjustly and honor other gods. But God's first expectation has ever been and will always be "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex 20:3). Amos teaches us that grace and faith are the true basis for worship and a right relationship to the Lord. His invitation ever stands: "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). • Lord God, roll down justice and mercy upon us through the righteous sacrifice offered by Your Son for our forgiveness. Amen. (TLSB)