# When God Calls Worship Noise

**Text:** Amos 5:21–24

**Series:** Return to the Lord

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**Sermon Type:** Expository

## Thesis

God rejects worship that tries to honor Him in the assembly while denying His righteousness in daily life.

## Hook

Israel gathered for its festivals, brought costly offerings, and filled the air with songs. If we had stood outside the assembly, we might have called it a strong day of worship. God listened to the same gathering and called their songs noise.

The ceremonies were not empty because the people lacked energy or skill. Their worship had become hateful to God because the hands raised in praise were also turning aside the poor, accepting bribes, and crushing the helpless. Amos brings the assembly and the street into the same judgment.

## Introduction

1. Israel was prosperous, religious, and confident that the day of the Lord would bring victory.
2. Amos warned that the day they desired would be darkness because their lives stood under God's judgment (Amos 5:18–20).
3. The city gate, where justice should have been given, had become a place where the poor were denied what was right (Amos 5:10–12).
4. God then judged their festivals, offerings, and music by the righteousness they refused to practice.

## The Text, Amos 5:21–24

> **21** “I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.
> **22** “Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.
> **23** “Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.
> **24** “But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

## I. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY CANNOT COVER A LIFE OF REBELLION (5:21–22)

### A. God rejected what the people expected Him to receive.

1. The festivals and solemn assemblies were visible signs of national religion.
2. The people could point to the calendar, the crowd, and the offerings as evidence that they honored God.
3. God answered with two strong verbs, “I hate” and “I reject.”
4. The same people who longed for the day of the Lord were already gathering for worship, but Amos says that when the Lord came near, He came as their Judge rather than their Defender.

### B. Costly gifts did not purchase God's approval.

1 Israel offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and peace offerings.

2 The amount given did not erase the wrong being done outside the assembly.

3 Amos had already named the conduct God saw.

> **Amos 5:10.** They hate him who reproves in the gate, And they abhor him who speaks with integrity.
> **Amos 5:11.** Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor And exact a tribute of grain from them, Though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, Yet you will not live in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.
> **Amos 5:12.** For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, You who distress the righteous and accept bribes And turn aside the poor in the gate.

4 A gift offered to God cannot make oppression acceptable to God.

### C. The rejection was moral rather than aesthetic.

1 Amos does not complain that the gathering lacked polish.

2 Better organization, stronger singing, or a larger offering would not have repaired the breach.

3 The people needed to repent of the life that contradicted the God they named in worship.

4 A congregation may be busy with religious work and still resist the Lord whose name it carries.

5 James applies the same test to Christian religion: what we confess must govern both our moral purity and our care for people who are easily neglected.

> **James 1:27.** Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

## II. A SONG BECOMES NOISE WHEN THE LIFE DENIES ITS WORDS (5:23)

### A. God heard the sound and refused to listen.

1 Israel called it singing, but God called it noise.

2 The harps may have been skillfully played, yet musical beauty could not make hypocrisy pleasing.

3 Worship cannot be separated from the worshiper.

4 The God praised in the assembly also rules our money, promises, speech, family, and treatment of the weak.

### B. Right words do not excuse wrong conduct.

1 A man can sing of God's holiness while protecting his own immorality.

2 He can praise God's love while using another person for his advantage.

3 He can thank God for grace while refusing to show mercy or make restitution.

4 The song does not sanctify the sin. The sin exposes the song as a lie.

### C. The promises we sing must become the life we live.

1 I often say that we lie the most at church when we sing.

1 I do not mean that every faltering Christian is deliberately lying.

2 I mean that the assembly can put promises on our lips that our lives have not surrendered to obey.

3 Amos forces us to hear our own words as God hears them.

2 Jesus later named the same contradiction between the lips and the heart.

> **Matthew 15:8.** ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

3 In **“I Surrender All,”** we sing, “All to Him I freely give,” and then repeat, “I surrender all.”

1 The words mean that no room of life remains locked against Christ.

2 We fail the promise when we protect a sinful habit, nurse a grievance, or insist that one part of life still belongs to us.

4 In **"Take My Life and Let It Be,"** we sing, "Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold," and, "Take my will and make it Thine."

1 The hymn gives God our wallet and our will, not merely our voice.

2 We fail the promise when we sing it while treating our money, time, speech, and decisions as private property.

5 In **"Where He Leads Me,"** we promise, "I'll go with Him, with Him all the way."

1 The verses lead through the garden and the judgment, so the promise is not limited to an easy path.

2 We fail it when we follow until obedience requires an apology, restitution, an unwanted duty, or a costly stand.

6 In **"Have Thine Own Way, Lord,"** we ask, "Mold me and make me after Thy will."

1 The song places us in the Potter's hands as clay that consents to be reshaped.

2 We fail it when Scripture corrects us and we become defensive, resist change, or ask God to reshape everyone except us.

7 The hymn is not the problem. The song becomes truth when the life submits to the Lord it names, and it becomes noise when the mouth makes promises the will refuses to keep.

### D. Amos does not condemn the worship God commanded.

1 Israel's sin was not that they assembled, offered, or sang.

2 Their ceremonies became offensive because they used them while refusing God's rule.

3 Repentance does not abandon worship. Repentance brings the worshiper back under the truth he confesses.

4 Paul describes the Christian's whole life as worship offered to God.

> **Romans 12:1.** Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

5 Jesus described the worship the Father seeks.

> **John 4:23.** "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.
> **John 4:24.** God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

## III. GOD DEMANDS RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT KEEPS FLOWING (5:24)

### A. Justice must roll down like waters.

1 Biblical justice gives what is right without bending the standard for wealth, influence, friendship, or personal gain.

2 At Israel's gate, the righteous were distressed, bribes were accepted, and the poor were turned aside.

3 God required justice to reach the very decisions where the vulnerable had been denied help.

4 Worship that praises the righteous God must produce honest dealing with people made in His image.

### B. Righteousness must be an ever-flowing stream.

1 A brief public gesture could not wash away a settled pattern of oppression.

2 The stream Amos describes does not appear only when people are watching.

3 Righteousness continues when truth costs money, when a promise becomes inconvenient, and when the injured person has no power to repay us.

4 The Lord had already told Israel what repentance required.

> **Amos 5:14.** Seek good and not evil, that you may live; And thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, Just as you have said!
> **Amos 5:15.** Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts May be gracious to the

> remnant of Joseph.

### C. Jesus Christ creates a people whose worship and life answer to the same Lord.

1. He confronted those who honored God with their lips while their hearts remained far from Him.
2. He gave Himself for our sins and rose again, offering forgiveness that calls the sinner to repentance and obedience.
3. The gospel does not add a ceremony to an unchanged life.
4. Christians worship the Father through Christ, and His grace trains them to reject ungodliness and live under His rule.

> **Titus 2:11.** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,
> **Titus 2:12.** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

## Application

Examine the distance between the words you sing and the choices you make after the assembly ends. Pay what you owe, tell the truth when a lie would protect you, keep the promise that has become costly, and refuse to use money, position, or spiritual influence to gain an unfair advantage.

Do not rely on a faithful attendance record or generous offering to excuse a sin you have decided to keep. God did not tell Israel to sing louder. He called them to hate evil, love good, and establish justice where they had corrupted it.

The answer is not to withdraw from worship because your life needs correction. Repent, make right what you can, receive the mercy offered in Christ, and return to the Father with a life submitted to the truth you confess.

## Conclusion

1. Israel maintained festivals and offerings that God refused to receive.
2. Their songs became noise because their conduct denied the righteousness they praised.
3. God required justice and righteousness to flow through ordinary decisions without drying up.
4. The Lord still seeks worshipers whose hearts and lives submit to Him in spirit and truth.

## Invitation

Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Hear His word, believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess His name, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.

If you are already a Christian and your conduct has contradicted your worship, repent and return. Let the prayers of the church help you bring the song of your lips and the obedience of your life under the same Lord.

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