



# Lenten Study 2025: Being People of Peace & Justice

This is not my typical Lenten Study. In years past I have looked at a book, or several books in the Bible, and worked our way through the readings. I have also done a characters study of children in scripture.

But then... this is not a typical year.

As a Canadian in 2025, we are living in a world threatened by the government of our closest neighbours, and none of us are sure what things will look like over the next weeks and months... or years. There is incredible insecurity.

And in the middle of that, there is incredible community and a desire for justice.

When I asked several friends what my theme or focus should be this year, the question that kept emerging is “how do we look at the Bible for recognition, hope and action in what we face today”.

## Week 1: Getting Grounded

Before we can run, we have to crawl. Before we sing, we have to discover our voice. And before we take actions for peace, we have to stand in our understanding of justice.

Chaos is designed to uproot us, to make it impossible to connect with each other or to a world that makes sense. So the first thing we have to do is firmly plant our feet in the land of our forebears.



This week we look at the minor prophets Joel, Amos, and Micah. These are not usually books that we study, and like most prophetic texts, are full of what awful people the Hebrews are and the horrible things that will happen to them as punishment. However, every prophetic book includes a word of hope, and the assurance that if they just change their behaviour to line up with God's expectations, the sorrows and political unrest will go away, and God will chase out their enemy instead. Such a simple response, but so few actually listen.

The sins listed in the three prophetic texts are common throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, and find their parallels in modernity quite completely.

- ✦ Sexual immorality (does not include queer identification and relationships, or abortion, all of which were well known in the ancient world and nothing is said about them in the Bible, regardless of how modern English wants it there)
- ✦ Poor treatment of strangers and foreigners
- ✦ Greed (the biggest problem)
- ✦ Worshipping false gods
- ✦ Following false preachers and teachers

The punishments for this are again consistent, and speak to the lived reality of those during the times of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the time periods when those contributing to writing and editing Joel, Amos, and Micah would have been writing, as well as the oral traditions that preceded all written texts in the Hebrew Scriptures. They include: disease, war, invading insects, drought, fire, and earthquakes.

It is important to note these prophets were not historians, they were not making predictions, and they did not live through the time they were writing about. Instead they were writing to warn contemporary and new generations about the problems they could face and how to respond to those problems in order to escape the punishments.

This is where we can start to learn.

We need to ground ourselves in hope and possibility. Those lessons are found within these texts as well.

Hope is everywhere. Possibility is everywhere. The possibility of justice is everywhere.

The key is we have to look for it and work for it. When we are comfortable, they seem both a given and beyond our means as individuals. However, when they are threatened, as so many of us feel today, we suddenly start to realize we do have the power to bring about a just world.

It also comes with the power to look around and really see who our 'enemies' are as well as our allies. Who will work with us to find that justice? Who is expecting us to work with them to bring hope in a world that is threatening and unknown?

How do we hear the words of hope in these ancient texts?



## Our texts this week

### **Joel 2: 28-29**

The Lord said:

28

Later, I will give my Spirit  
to everyone.

Your sons and daughters  
will prophesy.

Your old men  
will have dreams,  
and your young men  
will see visions.

29

In those days I will even give  
my Spirit to my servants,  
both men and women.

### **Micah 4:3-4**

3

He will settle arguments  
between distant  
and powerful nations.

They will pound their swords  
and their spears  
into rakes and shovels;  
they will never again make war  
or attack one another.

4

Everyone will find rest  
beneath their own fig trees  
or grape vines,  
and they will live in peace.  
This is a solemn promise  
of the Lord All-Powerful.

### **Amos 5:14-15**

14

If you really want to live,  
you must stop doing wrong  
and start doing right.  
I, the Lord God All-Powerful,  
will then be on your side,  
just as you claim I am.

15

Choose good instead of evil!  
See that justice is done.  
Maybe I, the Lord All-Powerful,  
will be kind to what's left  
of your people.

### **Micah 6:8**

8

The Lord God has told us  
what is right  
and what he demands:  
“See that justice is done,  
let mercy be your first concern,  
and humbly obey your God.”

*Found in the Contemporary English Version*