
Call to Repent

Amos 5:1-17

Russ Kennedy

We have been talking a lot about Critical Race Theory. We have insisted that its Marxist ideas are the roots and foundations for the so-called "Christian" Social Justice movement. Many of you have had little to no exposure to this. I know some may not care much. But, since this chapter in Amos has been cited over and over again to support the religious version of the world's Social Justice movement, I want to take a few minutes to summarize what Critical Race Theory is. This is a summary. It is not exhaustive and does not try to give you the history of it. Again, I strongly recommend *Fault Lines* by Voddie Backum.

The following is an edited version originally written by Mike Gonzalez for the Denver Gazette and appearing on DailySignal.com.

~ Here is a list (by no means exhaustive) of five key critical race theory principles. If your work place, your school, your principal, your school, the religious teacher/ or preacher you listen to says or does anything that includes these ideas, you can confidently call Bovine Manure when they deny it's critical race theory.

The first and most important bedrock principle of critical race theory is: racism is not an individual, conscious decision to be a racist or act on that belief. Racism is systemic. Racism, according to critical race theory's purveyors, is written into America's laws, institutions, and capitalist system. What masquerades as American culture is actually the norms and practices of white people. "Critical race theory," writes one of its main architects, Angela Harris, "takes the position that racism pervades our institutions, our beliefs, and our everyday practices."

A second principle follows from the first: Beliefs and behaviors are inherent in identity categories such as race, gender, ethnicity and so on. Thus, the members of these categories must not adopt American culture or other norms, such as Christianity. According to CRT teaching, American culture is merely a conspiracy to perpetuate white supremacy. Members of minority groups must never assimilate to standard practices or norms, even those that appear neutral on the surface.

A third bedrock principle is: white people receive unearned privilege at birth, while other peoples are denied it. This is often referred to as "white privilege".

A fourth principle is that merit is a myth. Since whites have rigged the system, all the ways we use to measure merit or success in education or work are far from objective. Hiring metrics and workplace benchmarks, and standardized tests for university admissions, must be eliminated.

The fifth and last principle is that equity must replace equality. Under critical race theory, the word equity has become corrupted, and has become the functional opposite of equality. Because of the systemic racism they see everywhere, government must step

in and treat individual Americans unequally. Only in that manner, will outcomes be equal. And on this, we have no less an authority than our Vice President Kamala Harris: “Equitable treatment means we all end up in the same place.”

To summarize: Critical Race Theory as the foundations for Social Justice activism declares:

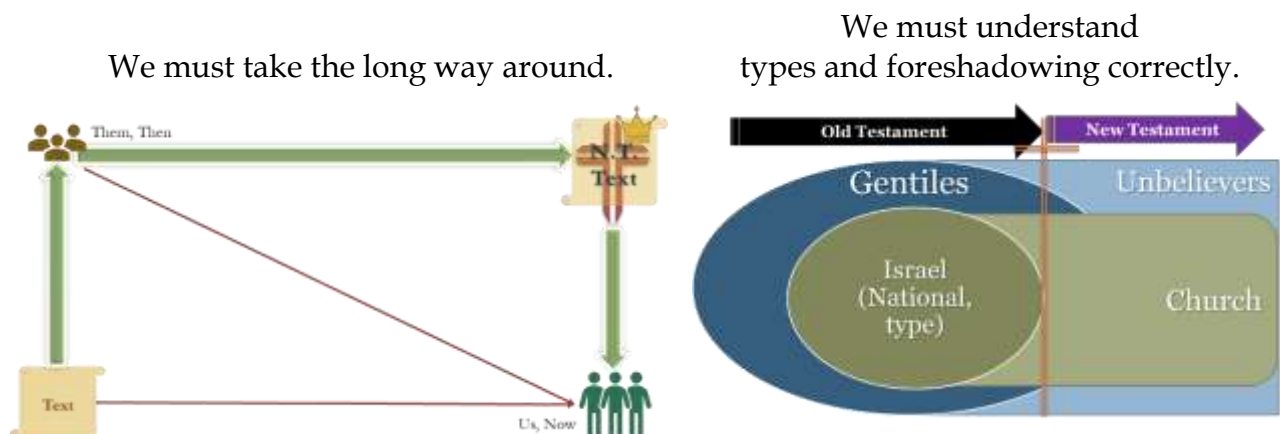
1. Racism (or any so-called bigotry) is not primarily individual, but is institutional.
2. Since beliefs and behaviors are an inherent part of one's identity, then you must not surrender any part of your identity to conform to other norms.
3. White privilege is something a white person is born with, blinds them to its own existence and disqualifies them from speaking on this subject.
4. Merit based results are irreparably rigged against equity and must be discarded and destroyed.
5. Unequal treatment of minorities is the only way to achieve equity. Equality of outcomes, not equality of opportunity.

Christian social justice is built on these principles. It interprets the Bible through the framework of sociology and CRT.

Any curriculum, any training program or any religious teaching that does any of the above is classic critical race theory. Any person who is doing this and denies what it is either uninformed – or may be lying to you. ~

One last statement is necessary. While we oppose the Marxist philosophy, basic beliefs and social goals of critical race theory based social justice, we recognize that racism is a part of our history and is still present. Where laws are unjust, they need to be changed. Where actions are unjust, they need to be confronted. Where churches are unjust, they need to be transformed or abandoned. We also believe that Christians should not believe, espouse or participate in movements that are based on the worlds so-called wisdom. Where there is sin in people and in the church, it should be addressed.

We are in an Old Testament text. We have two important principles that guide our handling of this text.



Before we dig in, notice the Hebrew parallel structure. This is a simple one. Other more complicated ones are detected by scholars. This has the power of simplicity.

Present Lamentation over Israel's Fall (v.1-3)

Call to Repent of Sins

In Praise of God

Call to Repent of Stubbornness

Future Lamentation over Israel's Ruin

With that in mind, give ear then to the words of Amos, the prophet of God.

Your Present Lamentation (v. 1-3)

A lamentation opens and closes this section. Here is a present lamentation over fallen Israel.

Her Call (v.1)

Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel:

Amos calls on Israel to listen, to take heed to the word he is about to give. It will be in the form of a lamentation. Think of this as a funeral dirge, a sad song over the demise of the house of Israel.

Her Condition (v.2)

² "Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel;
forsaken on her land, with none to raise her up."

Israel has fallen and there is remedy for her.

Israel is forsaken and there is no one to help her.

Her Consequences (v.3)

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."

90% of her population will either die or go into captivity. 1 out of 10 people will be left.

Repent of your Sins (v.4-8)

The repeated call is to seek God and live. Genuine repentance is repentance towards God first.

Religious Sins and your Insincerity (v.4-5)

God calls on them to repent of their religious insecurity and hypocrisy.

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.”

Turn towards God (v.4)

Repentance begins first with a conscious, intentional, turning towards the Lord.

Turn away from Idols (v.5)

Repentance also means we must turn away from the sins and idols that rule our hearts. For Israel, it meant not⁵ returning to the religious centers for the purpose of worshipping and sacrificing to idols.

Social Sins of your Injustice (v. 6-7)

God through the prophet calls on them to repent of their corrupting of justice.

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!

They had turned away from the Lord and no longer were seeking Him. How do we know this? Because Israel and corrupted justice and cast down righteousness. Their denial and disregard of the just and righteous treatment of people was evidence that they were seeking other things rather than seeking after God.

Celebration of God's Power (v.8-9)

Does it strike you as strange that in the middle of this lament, this condemnation of evil, this call to repent is a hymn of praise? But this is exactly what repentance requires. Genuine repentance acknowledges who God is and what He is like.

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.

God's Creative Power (v.8)

Turn to and seek after the God who made everything. He has made the stars. He transformed the darkness by filling it with light. He causes the waters from the seas and lakes to be blown across the earth and fall on the thirsty lands.

God's Mighty Name (v.8b)

God is named. He is identified. He can be known. Israel knows this. They know His name. What is the point? This is pointing to God's great character and reputation. They know His Name... but do they really know what He is like?

God's Destructive Power (v.9)

Israel had forgotten that God also has the power to de-create, to deconstruct, to destroy. The call to repent has with it the warning of judgment. This is grounded in the nature of God.

We are reminded that we are to worship God in *all* that He is. It is easy to worship God in His grace, His beauty, His mercies. But we also worship God in His defense of His Name and the vindication of His people.

Repent of your Stubbornness (v.10-15)

Israel is called to repent because her hardness, her unwillingness to bend to what God requires.

Because of your Intransigence (v. 10-13)

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.

What is the evidence of their stubbornness?

They Hate the Reprover (v.10)

They reject those who would confront them about their sins. God has sent many prophets to preach and to warn. They have responded with hatred.

They Abuse the Needy (v.11)

They had built lavish lifestyles on the backs of the poor. They heavily taxed them and then wasted it.

They Afflict the Righteous (v.12)

They have made life hard for those who wanted to be pleasing to God. Really, they have persecuted the righteous and perverted justice by taking bribes.

They Silence the Cautious (v.13)

They have created an environment in which the prudent, the sensible people do not speak up. It is such an evil time that it is best to keep silent. That was what was intended.

The parallels to today are painfully obvious. Yes, this is very prevalent in the culture around us. But that is not our primary concern. It is when this is the norm in the church that we are concerned with. Confronting and challenging sin in the church, particularly in the leadership, is met with anger and hatred. The poor in the church are not cared for and in some church circles, saddled with heavy burdens of giving. Sometimes, people who want to be pleasing to God find themselves opposed and even abused by those who care little for pleasing God. In some churches, there is such a poisoned atmosphere that it is best to keep silent.

IS this new to this modern age? No, these kinds of sins had to be addressed by James, Peter and Paul. May God grant that we will not become like this./

Because of God's Graciousness (v.14-15)

Repentance is called for because of God's graciousness.

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.

God's people should repent, not only because of impending chastening, but also because of God's great grace. He is gracious toward those who seek good and reject evil. One call to repentance was to seek God; here, the call to repentance is to seek good.

God will be gracious to the remnant of Israel. Less than 10% of the population will be left in the land. Yes, God will be gracious if they repent, restore and are reconciled.

Your Future Lamentation (v.16-17)

This section closes with a future lamentation over fallen Israel.

¹⁶Therefore 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.

Its Painful Reality (v.16)

Everywhere you go, you will find the weeping and wailing over the consequences of their sin. They seem to be unwilling to repent and change their ways. Therefore, there is enormous suffering and hardship *that God brings to them.*

Its Dreadful Reason (v.17)

Why is this lament rising up? Because God is passing through them. God will be passing through them with judgment. He will be the cause of their lament.

Here is one of the great differences between Israel and the church as God’s people. And it is one of difficult comparisons. Israel was a type of God’s people. But mostly they were unbelievers. One of the messages of Amos and other writing prophets was that Israel had lost her distinctiveness as God’s people. They believed and behaved just like the Gentiles around them. Therefore, God judged them just as He did the Gentiles.

The church is rarely treated as though it were a liable to judgment like Israel was. Yes, a gathered church can be judged right along with the world if she loses her distinctiveness. Generally, God chastens us as individuals, as His sons and daughters. However, when God judges a nation, the Christians in that nation often suffer as well. So we pray for grace in every situation God’s providence brings to us.

Reflect and Respond

How does this affect our response to the so-called Christian social justice movement and Critical Race Theory?

The Bible interprets all sin, whether it is injustice, racism, hatred of a people group or ethnic group, as the attitude and actions of individuals. Individuals make up a culture and cultures can institutionalize sin. We as believers should refuse to participate in it and should reject it in our churches.

There is no Biblical basis for any of the 5 major ideas of Critical Race Theory. It is Marxist at its core in that it sets one group of people against another. It should not be embraced by anyone in the church, at all.

Don't let anyone tell you that it is only an academic pursuit. It is everywhere. It behooves everyone one of you who are parents to ask your principal, your school board, your teachers if they have been trained in, accept or teach any or all of these five principles. Do NOT ask if they are teaching CRT... they will tell you no because they are trained to say no. Look at the curriculum. Show one day and insist on sitting in class. And I am not just talking about your public schools; check your private and Christian schools as well.

We will face growing cultural, social, and legal pressure as CRT becomes more and more pervasive. Christians and churches who openly critique and challenge will be attacked particularly when gender and LGBT sins are wrapped in it.

How do we individually and collectively respond to Amos' preaching?

As a church are we welcoming to all people? Each of you, do you embrace people from a different skin color, different ethnic, country, language than you?

Do you look down on others in the church? Do you make efforts to talk to people who are a different station in life?

Have you taken advantage of anyone who is a Christian, particularly in the church?

Once again I want to challenge you from the familiar text in James 2:1-7

My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

² For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. ³ If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor" – well, ⁴ doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

⁵ Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag

you into court? ⁷ Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

Let us rejoice that God has given us the opportunity to please and glorify Him in a rapidly, deteriorating culture.