

## Questions for personal reflection and/or discussion

## *This is church? (I)*

Pastor Alan Robinson, March 30, 2008

1. The title of the sermon series for the next three weeks (March 30, April 6, and April 13) is “*This is church?*” The italicized word “*This*” and the question mark are intended to cause us to ask the question with the emphasis on the first word....so *this* is church? What would your description be of a “good” church (or even *church* at all)? Consider the reasons for your definition of “church” – are they biblical or just personal preference?

Amos 5:21-27 (church Bible page 650)

Matthew 21:12-13 (church Bible page 698)

2. Read again the words of Amos in Amos 5:21-27 (church Bible page 650). It is hard to imagine a paragraph in the Bible that is more deliberately distasteful of activities that most people think make a good church. Amos declares that God says, “I hate, I despise...I will not accept...I will have no regard...I will not listen...” How would you feel if God had that kind of opinion about our church?

3. It seems clear from Amos 5 that the people of God in Amos’ time (mid 700s B.C.) were dutiful, and even sacrificial, in their church responsibilities. And yet, God was not pleased. In what ways do you think that we can be dutiful in our church activities and yet miss the mark in our church actualities? Can you think of specific examples?

4. The bottom line appears to be that the people in Amos’ day were not hearing and responding appropriately to God. They had replaced attentive ears and obedient lives with form and formality. They were coasting on cruise control rather than active listening and following. How easy for you and me to do the same. In this way we make God’s house a “den of robbers” a place that is full of deceit and yet is safe for the deceitful and does not challenge us to spiritual transformation. How can we all make sure that our congregation never becomes a place like that?