



# Unlikely heroes

Julian Smith *reflects on Amos 7:7-15*

Our thirst for super-hero movies seems unquenched, but in reality there is no one to sweep in and sweep away our problems. During the pandemic of 2020 and 2021 we saw heroes from a very different mould, including NHS staff, workers in care homes and supermarkets, corner-shop owners, volunteers at community shops and food banks, postal workers and delivery drivers. Many were immigrants, on the minimum wage and, until then, taken for granted. Unlikely heroes all.

## Journalling

### Our own psalm

by Julia McGuinness

When an American company made a group of employees abruptly redundant, writing researchers worked with them. They found that those encouraged to express their feelings about what had happened, gained new employment more quickly than the non-writers. The writers had an outlet for their anger, and did not carry it into future job interviews.

The Psalms encompass a wide range of emotions that the writer discharges into God's presence.

They lead the way in encouraging us to express our own emotions in prayer.

Is there a psalm that strikes a chord with how you feel just now? Copy out any verse of it that particularly resonates. Now add lines underneath to create your own psalm. Write freely from the heart and conclude with a line that intentionally commits your feelings to God – perhaps even copying your chosen psalm's last line.

Sit with your writing and invite God into the inner space you have made through moving your feelings onto the page. What comes into your awareness in the silence? ☺

“The one who... 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.”

Amos 5:8

This is nothing new for God. The Bible shows us how God calls and empowers ordinary people – Amos is a good example. He is not a smooth-talking professional; he is a plain man, a herdsman and dresser of trees, who has been called by God to prophesy to “my people Israel”. Amos is a foreigner from Judah who is sent to set Israel straight. Amos is abrasive and uncompromising, he is from a class of people beneath contempt, and he is an immigrant.

But Amos has some things going for him – he is open to God, willing and able to listen and he has the courage to say “yes” when God calls.

The age of super heroes may be fictional, but God's calling of unlikely heroes continues. If you are open to God, willing and able to listen and are brave enough to say “yes”, the next unlikely hero could be you. ☺

Dear God, we thank you for calling unlikely people to be heroes in your earthly kingdom and for those who have touched our lives. Give us grace to be open to you and courage to say “yes” to your call. Amen.

## Books of the Old Testament

### Part 28, Hosea

by Richard Greatrex

Hosea is a passionate book for turbulent times, spanning the reign of Jeroboam II (c. 787-747) until the imprisonment of Hoshea (c. 731-722), the last king of Israel. It was a desperate period. Kings were murdered, allegiances swung wildly, Israel fought Judah, political elites crushed their compatriots to consolidate power, and religious authorities allowed worship of Canaanite god Baal to infiltrate the Yahwistic faith.

In fourteen vivid chapters, Hosea predicts the fall of Israel

resulting from this continuing rebellion against God. But he holds out hope that repentance and restoration will come after judgement.

Chapters one to three introduce the metaphor of the relationship between God and Israel as that of a married couple – the wife is unfaithful. Chapters four to eleven portray God as a loving father and Israel as a rebellious son. Finally, twelve to fourteen interweave both these metaphors: the son is threatened with destruction unless he repents, while the repentant wife returns to her husband. The land blossoms, hope thrives and the relationship between God and people is restored. ☺