

The Amos scripture reading for this Sunday contains the familiar words:

*“Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. “*

Amos is a prophet sent to Northern Israel to declare “repent” to the people who have amassed wealth by stealing and cheating while worshipping false gods; no matter how wonderful the worship and songs appear as they are lifted up to God that is not what God desires. God desires justice and mercy and care for all the people. Justice and mercy is the right relationship God wants for us. Our relationships with one another reflect our relationship with God, no matter how bright and shiny and wonderful that worship and praise appears. Amos is calling the people out—perhaps even saying—you think you want God’s day to be here—but it will turn your world upside down, even be scary.

“Seek good and not evil, that you may live” Amos 5:14a; for I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe and push aside the needy in the gate.” Amos 5:12

Repent now, be kind and care for one another. Do not abhor *“the one who speaks the truth”*—the prophet who stands before the people... God’s own gift of the Commandments and special people, prophets, sent to call them to repent will bring this justice into being. The care for one another is to be initiated not as a slow roll out, but now, immediately, on all the people. Amos is calling for the people to repent now, and to lament for their transgressions, repenting or turning back, to the God of all Creation, the giver of justice and righteousness.

Let Justice Roll down Like Waters—a memorial to Martin Luther King—Yerba Buena Gardens



The Bible Project uses graphics to communicate Scripture, history and interpretation; it offers a video that is helpful in putting this whole book into context of the story of the Bible and the longed for appearance of the Messiah. More on the story of Amos <https://bibleproject.com/videos/amos/>

Psalm 70 confronts us with a Psalm of Lament, a cry for God to be present in a time of grief or anger or both. Unlike many Psalms, Psalm 70 does not end in praise, but in longing for God to be present. God remains the focus, with a remembrance of praise, but in this moment the psalmist can only cry out in prayer to the One who listens. Can we hear the cries of people around us? Can we cry out—asking God to swiftly come...

*Be pleased, O God, to deliver me; * O God, make haste to help me.*

*Let those who seek my life be ashamed and altogether dismayed; * let those who take pleasure in my misfortune draw back and be disgraced.*

*Let those who say to me “Aha!” and gloat over me turn back, * because they are ashamed.*

*Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; * let those who love your salvation say for ever,*

“Great is the Holy One!”

*But as for me, I am poor and needy; * come to me speedily, O God.*

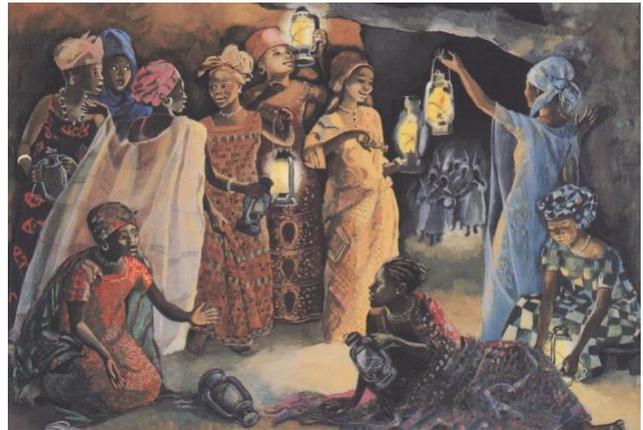
*You are my helper and my deliverer; * O God, do not tarry.*

The imagery of the parable of bridesmaids Matthew 25:1-13 begins with an expectation of abundance—a wedding feast—and the bridesmaids bringing their lamps to await the coming of the bridegroom even in the dark of night. And then history of the interpretation of this scripture becomes a mixture of metaphor, allegory and a warning that we need to be prepared, even if the coming of the bridegroom is delayed. We need to be vigilant and prepared for when the Bridegroom or Christ comes—or we will be left behind. Some the bridesmaids brought extra oil, the others, “foolish” did not.

Jesus said, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

We need to be vigilant and prepared for when the Bridegroom or Christ comes—or we will be left behind. How we wait however, makes a difference. Some the bridesmaids brought extra oil, the other “foolish” bridesmaids, did not. And when he foolish ones go to buy more oil, the bridegroom comes and they miss out. Should they have waited empty handed? Were they worried about the appearance of having no oil? Why does the groom not recognize them now that they are prepared to celebrate?

We know it is not what we bring to God, our virtue bucket - it is how we wait. To be vigilant, does not mean we do not rest or sleep but it does matter what this waiting looks like. Picking up on the Old Testament themes, Matthew insists we need to care for our neighbor, offer hospitality to the stranger, feed the hungry and heal the sick.



The Ten Young Woman – JESUS MAFA-

How we act is the light we cannot hide under a bushel. In Matthew’s telling on the Sermon on the Mount: *“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”* Matthew 5:15-16

The kingdom of heaven is near and this moment we live, this time we live, matters to God. Our time, is God’s time too—God is here, right now, as we wait...