

Ordinary Time Reflections for June 9, 2020

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos 5:24

Every morning I walk with Lucy dog along the Umatilla River. This past week as I walked Amos’ words have played over and over in my head like a mantra. We have lately witnessed how the power of water can transform the river’s course and the land around it. Through the cycles of seasons the river can run slow exposing that which is hidden or rush fast flooding dry land and homes. In all the seasons the river never stops its flow.

The prophet Amos was a shepherd called out by God to address the injustices of his day. His message is direct, uncompromising. The transgressions he names are many: The righteous are sold into slavery for nonpayment of debts; due process is denied in the courts; the wealthy ‘oppress the poor and crush the needy’ while they ‘loungue on their couches’; bribery is rampant; those in charge make a show of their religious practices but ignore the truth in which those practices are grounded.

This past week left me reeling with emotions, and I sense I am not alone in this. Anger gives way to love and back again to anger. Feelings of helplessness, of ‘do something’, give way to the silence contemplation. Pain and tears, signs of hope and change— There have been Amos moments of rage and Jesus moments of ‘love your enemies.’ We can feel helpless and powerless when confronted with the upheavals we have experienced in past months. The events of Amos’ time obviously are not new. Like the seasons of the river they seem to cycle over and over. The goodness of the human spirit prevails and then wanes and then comes again. It is right to have all of these feelings, to live with uncertainty, and questions of how to act of our faith in such times as these.

“Let justice roll down like waters.” We have heard Martin Luther King Jr. speak Amos’ words at the Lincoln Memorial. We long for a prophet again to speak those words into actions. We long for a clear road, an end to confusion, a plan for action. That will come. It always does. For right now we can rely on the words of prophets past to guide the way and give us hope. Amos ends his denunciations with promises of restoration—breaches will be repaired, ruins restored, oppression will end, and peace over the land will come. So it will be again.

Prayer: God of justice and mercy, receive our emotions, reveal to us righteous paths to travel, and bring us into a future of hopes restored for all peoples and for this planet called Earth. Amen.

Pastor Kate Bottorff