

God of justice, inspire us. Help us change the world into the place you always desired for it to be. Amen.

Why would anyone want the Day of the Lord to arrive?

The prophet Amos asks us today: why do you want the Day of the Lord?

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Day of the Lord referred to the day of God's action in the world.

To some folks, that might sound great! God is going to swoop in and intervene in the affairs of the world and make everything the way it ought to be.

Not so fast, warns Amos. It's not going to be what you think.

What God has prepared for us is not necessarily what we want or expect. It's going to change us and shake our world to its foundations.

We have some preconceived notions of what God's intervention will look like. The reality is going to be far better and far more confusing than we could ever imagine.

Have you ever really wanted something, felt like it was a calling in your life, and worked towards that calling? Think, perhaps, of someone who deeply desires to be a parent – and they are blessed not to have any of the health complications that can sometimes make that desire impossible.

This person had some idea about what parenting would be like. They expected to have sleepless nights and poopy diapers, and they also expected to have snuggles and smiles. But the depth of becoming a parent goes so far beyond sleep schedules and snuggles.

It is something far better and far more confusing than any non-parent could ever comprehend.

The Day of the Lord's action will be like that.

Are we ready?

Amos thinks not.

This is why the Day of the Lord is to be feared rather than celebrated. We haven't been preparing.

God is going to come like the bridegroom to the feast, and all of us bridesmaids will prove to be foolish, with no oil in our lamps to greet him.

Amos tells us what we can do to prepare for God's action in the world.

Newsflash: it's not more pious worship services.

Your thoughts and prayers are not what make you a faithful follower of God.

On the contrary, your worship practice is secondary to how you live out your faith. God doesn't want us to stay safe in our homes and churches, never venturing beyond our own comfort zones. God doesn't ask us to stay away from controversy and always to follow the rules.

God only has one rule for us.

Do justice.

Dismantle the systems of injustice in our world that create unfair situations for God's children, and create systems of righteousness that honor everyone's humanity.

Do justice.

And don't just do it once. Don't just pick your pet project and focus all your efforts there.

Create a flood of righteousness!

In the desert – in that arid environment that Amos and Jesus called home – let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream!

Fill those dry riverbeds to overflowing!

Amos calls us to fix the world in which we live before we even consider the world that is to come.

Faithful theology must be grounded in what God's people are *doing* in the world today.

This whole Christianity thing isn't primarily about angels blowing trumpets and meeting God in the sky like some kind of Kirk Cameron movie.

I mean, yes – the Bible talks about meeting God at the end of time, and promises the resurrection of the dead. But that's not the primary focus of the Bible, nor is it the primary purpose of Christianity.

The most important thing to our Christian faith is that we live it.

Now.

In *this* world.

The next world won't matter at all if we have neglected our neighbor and perpetuated systems of injustice.

Our calling, as God's faithful people, is to follow the instruction of Amos:
Create a world so full of justice and righteousness that it floods the waterways and gets into everyone's lives like sand at a beach gets in between every finger and toe, and sticks to your towels and shoes, and you're still finding it weeks later. There's no escaping it.

Justice should be like that.

Pervasive. Ever-present. Inescapable.

That is the point of our faith.

And we can look to other places in Scripture to figure out how to do it.

Throughout the history of God's people trying to live out their faith, we find examples that tell us exactly what doing justice looks like.

The Hebrew prophets tell us to care for the widow and the orphan.

This is shorthand for saying, care for anyone who does not have a protector. Put yourself on the line for the sake of the vulnerable people in society.

Today?

The Hebrew prophets would tell us to care for the gay teen who was kicked out of their house when they came out to their family.

The Hebrew prophets would tell us to care for the mentally ill, particularly those who are estranged from their family and have no access to health care, and so often end up living on the streets.

The Hebrew prophets would tell us to care for those with HIV/AIDS, for the sex-trafficked youth, for the recently incarcerated, for the undocumented worker, and for everyone else our society tries to label as unclean.

And yes, the Hebrew prophets would still tell us to care for the widow and the orphan.

Today.

Care for them today.

Through countless interactions and parables and teachings, Jesus tells us to respect those who are overlooked by society. Treat them as human beings.

In his day, it was the Samaritan, the tax collector, the prostitute... and women.

Today, Jesus would tell us to create justice for communities of color. Make the world just as safe for Black boys as it is for white. Dismantle racism at its origin.

Challenge the prejudice of your loved ones, even at the expense of your relationship with them. Living a life of justice is more important than their opinion of you.

Today, Jesus would tell us to work for justice for all workers. And he would tell us to work against prejudice against people based on their profession. A janitor isn't less of a person than a CEO – they are both beloved children of God, living out their calling and sharing their spiritual gifts with the world.

Today, Jesus would still tell us to create justice for women.

We are human beings.

We are children of God.

We are not sex objects, put here for the pleasure or displeasure of men.

Jesus would tell us to smash the patriarchy so hard that a girl who is born today will never be able to tell a #metoo story, like the ones that every single woman in this room today could tell.

Do it today.

Create justice for these people now.

In the book of Acts, through Peter's interaction with the Ethiopian court official, we learn that everyone is welcome to join God's family, regardless of their physical ability or disability, and regardless of their conformity to traditional gender roles.

Today, Peter and the Spirit would tell us, welcome transgender folks into our faith communities. Advocate on their behalf. Challenge those who persecute them. Create a better world for trans folks, so that they don't have to fear for their lives when they leave their homes.

Today, Peter and the Spirit would tell us, welcome folks with physical and developmental disabilities into our church family. Advocate on their behalf. Create a world in which all of God's children will be seen and valued, regardless of their conformity to society's expectations.

Today.

Do it today.

In a reading that we will hear from the Gospel of Matthew in two weeks, Jesus tells us to care for the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned.

No translation necessary.

Care for these people.
Today.

Though Amos tells us not to look forward to it, the Day of the Lord *is* coming.
Some day, God's action will be evident among us. And it will not be what we expect.
The only way to prepare for that day is to let justice and righteousness overwhelm
the world!

And perhaps then, we will begin to see the action of the Lord.

Through our own work to create a more just society, maybe – just maybe – we will
experience some shadow of what the Day of the Lord promises to bring when it does
arrive.

Because it is still coming.

And there *is* a better place that we all can look forward to.

And when our time comes, though we probably have some expectations of what it
might be like, the final breaths of our earthly life will be both more beautiful and
more confusing than we or our loved ones could ever imagine.

That is what happens when the Day of the Lord appears.

Our expectations will be shattered.

Everything we thought we knew will be turned on its head.

It will probably be terrifying for anyone who gets to experience it.

But it will also be the most beautiful thing you have ever seen.

And while we wait for it to come, God has one task for us – one thing that we can do to
prepare for that day:

Do justice.

Really.

Do it today.

Don't make excuses. God is only asking for this one thing. And it's the most important
thing of all.

Do justice.

Let streams of righteousness flood the whole world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.