



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 7, 2013



SCRIPTURE

AMOS 5:18-24

18 Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD!
Why do you want the day of the LORD?
It is darkness, not light;
19 as if someone fled from a lion,
and was met by a bear;
or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall,
and was bitten by a snake.
20 Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?
21 I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.
23 Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
24 But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

DEVOTIONAL

The countryside around Kibbutz Gal'on in the Shephelah region of central Israel is crisscrossed by seasonal streams called wadis. These wadis over swell during the early autumn rains in October and the late spring rains in April. But throughout the long summer months, the wadis become as parched as the land that surrounds them.

Amos speaks the words of the LORD to the wayward nation of Israel, where the wealthy enjoyed ease and privilege while the poor they oppressed thirsted for justice and righteousness: "... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing wadi." It's a paradoxical image: wadis are, by their very definition not permanent. Imagine the relief – the impossible dream – of having a dependable, never-ending source of water in an arid land. Imagine the joy – and profound blessing – of unending justice throughout a society, especially for the most powerless and vulnerable.

Thus the words delivered by the prophet serve as a double command. The LORD commands the powerful – of ancient days and of today – to be extravagant in their generosity and prodigal in their care for their brothers and sisters: such is the worship that delights the LORD. But it is ultimately God who acts to bring the deep justice and the righteousness that truly satisfies. And with the coming of the day of the LORD comes the loving, gracious, awesome, and holy judgment of our sovereign God, who commands and transforms creation in order to bring God's redemption to all humankind. It is God who acts, through the coming of God's promised Messiah, to establish God's eternal kingdom of righteousness for which we all search and thirst.

PRAYER

Holy God, by your Spirit, fill me to overflowing with Christ's righteousness, that as your redeemed child I may today accomplish one deed or speak one word that demonstrates the justice that marks your kingdom. Through Jesus Christ, the One whose coming we await. Amen.

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