

Let Justice Roll Down, Amos 5:18-24

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on January 18th, 2009

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.."
Martin Luther King

"He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it."
Martin Luther King

"Let Justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
Amos 5:24

Intro

This weekend we celebrate Martin Luther King for his courage and conviction as an advocate of freedom, justice and non-violence for all. All too often conservatives (Most often white) want to mitigate Dr. King's accomplishments by pointing to the fragility of his human sin. Just like David, Solomon and many other biblical characters we see God using fragile humanity in sublime ways and in spite of their flawed character. This demonstrates the incredible grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the lives of his people. This gives us hope, and reminds us that God is a God of grace.

Part of God's amazing grace is the reality that He is equally holy, just and righteous. The prophets are an incredible reminder of man's continuous love affair with idols, which often lead to the subtle (And not so subtle) oppression of others. In our time today, we are going to take a look at the very righteous justice of God.

From the Head...

Sin is a very destructive thing in our lives. Sin forces us to live for ourselves, and begins with the idea that it may be wrong, but the benefits of sin outweigh any consequences. The sin is our idol that gives us happiness and joy. A second stage in sin comes when our minds become deluded into believing our lives and actions are actually godly, and we use religion to mask our sin, and vilify our enemies.

Justice is a term that has been used by many and abused by most. Justice often means gaining revenge from our enemies, and placing "Our People" in power. It has been the mantra of every rebellion and coupe, and is often at the center of controversy and oppression. This does not negate the fact that God is a God of justice, and that it is His justice that must ultimately prevail.

The Sins of God's People

The first few chapters outlines why God is angry, and Amos begins with those pagan tribes that displayed horrific and atrocious acts toward others. Damascus is judged for cruelty to Gilead, Gaza is condemned for enslaving Edom, Tyre broke their treaties, Edom pursued their brothers with a sword, Ammon murdered pregnant women in Gilead, Moab desecrated the bones of Edom's king. Not only did they do these vile acts, but they did it many times (Thus the *"For three transgressions...and for four."* This was a poetic way to express a plural, and a multiple of the plural).

God turns His righteous gaze to His people. Judah is judged because it has *"Rejected the law of the Lord"* (**Amos 2:4**), and have sold the *"Righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals"* (**Amos 2:6**). Amos then writes about Israel, God's chosen (See **Genesis 35:10-12** cf. **Amos 3: 1-2**). His judgment is coming to Israel because they have lived in opulence while they oppress the poor (**Amos 4:1**).

God's Judgment Comes With a Source of Redemption

The first part of chapter five reminds Israel that He is their redeemer, and that they can turn from their sins in repentance, seek Him and live (**Amos 5:5-7**). God is gracious, yet He is righteous. Their sins have caused great calamity on the land, and He is righteous to judge them. Ultimately their sin is rejected Him (Idol Worship) that leads to oppression. When we become our own gods, we will ultimately make policy that suits ourselves, and look at "others" as a threat to our well-being. With seeking God comes the seeking of welfare for all (**Amos 5:14-15**).

Religion Revels in the Judgment of Others

What we see in **Amos 5** is the excitement centered on the "Day of the Lord."¹ Israel was excited about this day, because they believed that God would avenge them, and kill their enemies. The church often gets caught up in this kind of us vs. them mentality. We tend to see other people's sin, and fail to see our own. It is easy to become so acculturated by our

¹ The prophets use this phrase quite often to depict God's judgment (**Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; 22:5; 34:8; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 7:19; 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14-18; Zechariah 4:1; Malachi 4:5**). Ultimately Christ comes back for the final "Day of the Lord" to judge humanity for its sin (**Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17**).

surroundings and thought processes that we fail to realize that we are living and acting on humanistic principles rather than God's principles. We are operating on revenge and power and not mercy and grace. Biblical justice is synonymous with the "Righteousness" of God. Biblical justice seeks the welfare of all men (**Jeremiah 29:7**) no matter what tribe they come from, and how bad of an enemy they are.

The Day of the Lord Is a Time of Darkness

A person who is truly in Christ, should never be anticipating the day of the Lord. Our desire should be like God's in that we should never desire the destruction of others, but we should pray for their salvation (**Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25**). When we are truly "Sinners saved by grace," we can't in any way look down on others and hope for their destruction.

For this God disdains religious festival, and religious rituals in place of a true piety caused by a heart that reflects God's justice and mercy (See **Amos 5:21-23**). When our hearts are formed by the gospel, we seek transformation, and allow God to fight our battles and ultimately judge those that oppress us. In human justice we seek our own Good at the expense of others. It revels in revenge and bitterness, and not transformation and love. In God-Centered justice, we seek the welfare of others, often at our own expense, knowing that God's just wrath will vindicate us in the end (See **Revelation 6:9-11**).

... to the Heart

There is a day that God will completely judge sin and oppression, and we can be confident that in spite of ourselves, there is a way to "Seek Him and live," through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, where God's justice, and wrath was demonstrated, in order to secure a place in His family (See **Romans 3:23-25**).

God has secured Justice in His Son so that we could live in His righteousness (**2 Corinthians 5:21**) so that we would be people that would live justly, and seek a godly justice for all people and let *"Justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

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