

## Advent Devotional December 9, 2023

### Scripture

#### Amos 5:18-27

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 fattened 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.*

25 *Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 26*

*You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for*

*yourselves; 27 therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the*

*God of hosts.*

### Devotion

#### The Rev. Dr. Leanna Fuller, Joan Marshall Associate Professor of Pastoral Care

Today's reading begins with a warning: "Be careful what you wish for!" In the first three verses of this passage, Amos strongly cautions the Israelites—who are longing for the day of the Lord—because they are making assumptions about what that day will bring.

Most scholars agree that "the day of the Lord" was traditionally a time for the people to remember God's past mighty acts and to look toward God's intervention on their behalf in the future. But instead of a day of deliverance, Amos describes the day of the Lord as a day of judgment. It's as if the people of Israel have assumed that because God was faithful to them in the past, their choices in the present have no bearing on that relationship. They have assumed that they could offer empty worship and still expect God to be pleased with them. Instead, God closes God's eyes and ears to the people's praises (vv. 21-23), and powerfully points to justice and righteousness as the true goals of religious devotion.

I wonder what kinds of assumptions we make today about the relationship between God's faithfulness and our choices. Do we assume that because we are "good Christians" who seek to honor God, our opinions are naturally correct? Do we assume that because God has been true to us in the past, it

doesn't matter what decisions we make now—even when our decisions lead us to ignore demands for justice from those experiencing poverty or oppression?

Today's text suggests that when we make such assumptions, we are bound to be bitterly disappointed. Instead, we are called to examine the way we live our lives—both individually and communally—and do all we can to pursue faithfulness and justice on behalf of the world that God so loves.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, in this season of anticipation remind us that we await the birth of one who offered care and compassion to all people. Help us to show our faithfulness to you in ways that embody the justice and righteousness that you desire for this world you have lovingly created. In Jesus' name, Amen.