

Monday Quotes



Grain

“No, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” –Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1963.

Field

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 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. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amos 5:21-24

Thoughts

Every time I hear this passage from Amos, I think back to Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1963 speech at the March on Washington. While better known as the “I have a dream” speech, my favorite part is when King quotes this passage from Amos. In this segment of his speech, King declares that he will not be satisfied with only equality under law; with only legal measures such as desegregation or the universal right to vote. He and the rest of the civil rights movement will only be satisfied with authentic equality and justice in every facet of life, where “justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an every-flowing stream.” (See the link at the bottom of the page for the full speech)

But while King speaks with hope, the quoted passage is marked by anger and disappointment. In Amos chapter 5, God feels the Israelites have completely abandoned his commandments. While God’s people hold great festivals for him, offer an abundance of sacrificial offerings, and raise their voices in praise, God is not satisfied. God wants authentic righteousness and justice in every action and deed, and ceremonial praise cannot serve as a placeholder. God will not accept these gestures from those who “trample the poor,” “abhor the one who speaks the truth,” and allow injustice to capture their hearts (see Amos 5:10-13). While ceremony and praise are important, they do not replace righteousness and justice on earth, just as “equal under the law” doesn’t mean true social equity. It is not enough to only love and praise God, we must also love and care for each other. So God calls for change through the prophet Amos. God calls for “justice [to] roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Tomorrow, almost 60 years after King’s speech, the last ballot of the 2020 Presidential Election will be cast. It can be tempting to take a “post-election break” if your candidate wins, or surrender to despair if they lose. But if there is one thing that this passage from Amos can remind us, it is that fighting for justice and righteousness is one of God’s highest priorities. So, no matter who wins this election, “we [cannot] be satisfied.” We cannot be satisfied with winning elections, but only with justice, righteousness, and peace for all people. Happy Monday to you all, and do not forget to vote!

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May God bless you this week,

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