

**“LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN”**

**Sermon for the 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
First Reading: Amos 5:18-24**

A young man came to St. Mark’s recently and asked one of our members, “Does this church mix religion and politics?” The member replied, “I’ll need to ask one of the pastors!” I told the member, “No, we don’t mix religion and politics. We hold that “religion”—if that means engaging in a life-long relationship with Almighty God—is the first and only order of our business. Politics, as the art or business of governing individuals in human communities, is essential to an earthly, here and now civil life. Those who have God’s gift of governance are blessed indeed; those who seek public office to serve us all do a great and good work.

Our walk with the Lord should have considerable consequence in the ways we relate to other human beings and the ways in which we share resources. This means that religion has outcomes; in people it has consequences. A life of trust in God and our care for the neighbor effects the ways in which politics are conducted. In the Church we foster life with the Lord. That’s our business. In the world we participate in politics—and other pursuits—as servants of Christ.

We cannot come to worship the Lord this day without being aware of the momentous event in our American political life of our electing a new President-to-be for the years ahead. However we participated in that elective process, you and I will share its outcomes. The head of our national family will soon change. Many of the individuals in the apparatus of government will change. We should pray for the one soon to leave office and pray for the one who will be sworn into office. Our trust in God calls for our praying that the President of these United States performs his responsibilities in law with obedience to his faith in the Lord.

In our framework of government in this beloved land we have checks and balances on the Chief Executive, so that he or she can be empowered by our Congress and laws enacted can be judged by courts. We are blessed that religion in free and open expression can shape the hearts and minds of persons with authority, for all of us are under God. Our Pledge of Allegiance says it well: we are one nation, *under God*, under his care, under his providence, under his judgment.

There was a prophet in Israel long ago who lived in a time of great change. The economy was good; folks were prosperous; religion had become a kind of cover for both corruption and indulgence. Rituals of sacrifice in temples were excessive and delightful to the ears and the eyes, but vacuous in their meaning. It was all a show, designed to demonstrate to the Lord how successful religion could be and the land could flourish.

But the word of the Lord came to Amos, who dared to speak as the Lord spoke to him,

*I hate, I despise your festivals, and  
I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. . . Take away from me  
the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.*

What a rebuke! What a put down! What an accusation to a nation that did not recognize enemies of excess inside the nation and enemies outside waiting to pounce on it! “I hate your celebrations of what parades as truth and piety and goodness!” says the Lord God.

*But let justice roll down, roll down, rush, like the waters, and  
righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

**That's the word for today: Let justice roll down . . . like the waters.**

**“Justice.” Like “wisdom,” and “truth,” and “goodness,” and “love.” Hard to define in their essentiality, but known in their reality when expressed in a society or a nation where people live their lives in obedience to God's commands, when carried out, ever so haltingly in communion with the God we come to know in Jesus.**

**Why do we fake it? Why do we avoid it—this walking with the Lord? Why do we suppose that we are smarter or better or above the ways of the people of God?**

**We are, in the words of our confessional liturgy, “captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.” It is our ancient enemy, the Evil One, who seduces us into his deceptive ways.**

**People of God, stay on course in these momentous days! Be eager for the King's coming—not some distant day or even some day soon—but in our lives now, in our hearts and in our spirits. Pray for one another, pray for those who by our participation in the politics of making a good society will work it as best we can. Let justice—born of obedience to the Lord and the love of neighbor—roll down, into our blood, into our thoughts, into our hearts!**