

November 14 2021

Introduction to the Scripture:

This week, the scripture passage at the centre of our worship is taken from the prophecy of Amos. Amos is known to be one of the grumpy preachers. He called on his people to return their hearts to God instead of wasting their efforts on materialism, corruption and weak spirituality. This passage from Amos is said to have been Martin Luther King Jr's favourite, one he quoted often, including in his famous "I have a Dream" speech. The scripture inspired us to look at Martin Luther King Jr and others who have applied their faith story to some of the injustices they experienced in the world around them.

Scripture Reading: Amos 5:21-24

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.

Readings:

Dr Martin Luther King's speech August 28, 1963 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC

Some of the terms describing racialized groups have been changed.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the ~~Negro~~ African American community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny.

And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, when will you be satisfied? We can never be satisfied as long as the ~~Negro~~ African American is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

-We cannot be satisfied as long as the ~~Negro~~ *African American's* basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating: for whites only.

We cannot be satisfied as long as a ~~Negro~~ *African American* in Mississippi cannot vote and ~~Negro~~ an *African American* in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Malala Yousafzai: acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize 2014

When my world suddenly changed, my priorities changed too. I had two options. One was to remain silent and wait to be killed. And the second was to speak up and then be killed. I chose the second one. I decided to speak up. We could not just stand by and see those injustices of the terrorists denying our rights, ruthlessly killing people and misusing the name of Islam. We decided to raise our voice and tell them: Have you not learnt, have you not learnt that in the Holy Quran Allah says: if you kill one person it is as if you kill all of humanity?

Do you not know that Mohammad, peace be upon him, the prophet of mercy, he says, “do not harm yourself or others.”

And do you not know that the very first word of the Holy Quran is the word “Iqra,” which means “read”?

The terrorists tried to stop us from reading and attacked me and my friends who are here today, on our school bus in 2012, but neither their ideas nor their bullets could win. We survived. And since that day, our voices have grown louder and louder. I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not. It is the story of many girls.

In my own village, there is still no secondary school for girls. And it is my wish and my commitment, and now my challenge to build one so that my friends and my sisters can go to school there and get a quality education and get this opportunity to fulfil their dreams.

This is where I will begin, but it is not where I will stop. I will continue this fight until I see every child in school.

Dear brothers and sisters, great people who brought change, like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and Aung San Suu Kyi, once stood here on this stage. I hope the steps that Kailash Satyarthi and I have taken so far and will take on this journey will also bring change—lasting change.

Autumn Peltier – speech to the United Nations’ General Assembly

When you ask the question about why is the water so sacred, it’s not just because we need it, and nothing can survive without water. It’s because for years and years our ancestors have passed on traditional oral knowledge that our water is alive, and our water has a spirit. Our first water teaching comes from within our own mother. We literally live in water for nine months, floating in that sacred water that gives us life.

We can’t live in our mother’s womb without water. As a fetus, we need that sacred water for development. The sacred significance is that my mother comes from her mother’s water, my grandmother comes from her mother’s water, and my great-great grandmother comes from her mother’s water. Flowing within us is original water, lifeblood of Mother Earth that sustains us, as we come from this land.

This is why I’m here today. I have been raised in a traditional way and knowing my territory and the waters around my country and the issues my people face. I have heard of places like Flint and Six Nations in the Grand River; all across these lands we know somewhere where someone can’t drink the water. Why so many, and why have they gone without water so long?

We need to protect the habitants around all waters across the world. We need to remember that our ancestors’ prayers are still protecting this land, and that we are our ancestors’ hope. One day I will be an ancestor, and I want my descendants to know I used my voice so they can have a future.

We need to join forces with all nations regardless of colour and nationality. Mother Earth does not discriminate, and we need Mother Earth to live, and we need the waters. When we stand together as one, we are one voice and one nation, and together as one we are stronger. We have this one last chance to save our planet. Let’s do this for our great, great grandchildren.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu – on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 (excerpts)

Once a Zambian and a South African, it is said, were talking. The Zambian then boasted about their Minister of Naval Affairs. The South African asked, “But you have no navy, no access to the sea. How then can you have a Minister of Naval Affairs?” The Zambian retorted, “Well, in South Africa you have a Minister of Justice, don’t you?”

It is against this system that our people have sought to protest peacefully since 1912 at least, with the founding of the African National Congress. They have used the conventional methods of peaceful protest – petitions, demonstrations, deputations, and even a passive resistance campaign. A tribute to our people’s commitment to peaceful change is the fact that the only South Africans to win the Nobel Peace Prize are both black. Our people are peace-loving to a fault. The response of the authorities has been an escalating intransigence and violence, the violence of police dogs, tear gas, detention without trial, exile, and even death.

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There is no peace in Southern Africa. There is no peace because there is no justice. There can be no real peace and security until there be first justice enjoyed by all the inhabitants of that beautiful land. The Bible knows nothing about peace without justice, for that would be crying “peace, peace, where there is no peace”. God’s Shalom, peace, involves inevitably righteousness, justice, wholeness, fullness of life, participation in decision-making, goodness, laughter, joy, compassion, sharing and reconciliation.

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When will we learn that human beings are of infinite value because they have been created in the image of God, and that it is a blasphemy to treat them as if they were less than this and to do so ultimately recoils on those who do this? In dehumanizing others, they are themselves dehumanized. Perhaps oppression dehumanizes the oppressor as much as, if not more than, the oppressed. They need each other to become truly free, to become human. We can be human only in fellowship, in community, in koinonia, in peace.

Let us work to be peacemakers, those given a wonderful share in Our Lord’s ministry of reconciliation. If we want peace, so we have been told, let us work for justice. Let us beat our swords into ploughshares.