Sermon November 8, 2026

Object: A pitcher of water and a small bowl (or a picture of a river)

Good morning, friends!

(Pour a little water into the bowl.)

What does water do?

(Let children answer.)

Water moves. It flows. It goes where it needs to go.

Now imagine if water stopped moving. What happens?

It can get dirty. It can get stagnant. It doesn't help things grow.

In today's Bible reading, the prophet Amos says something very interesting. He says,

"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

That's a big sentence. But ***justice is really about making sure people are treated fairly, kindly, and with love.***

Sometimes we're busy doing our own thing. We're playing, talking with friends, or hurrying somewhere. Then we notice someone sitting alone. Or someone who is sad. Or someone being left out.

That's an interruption, isn't it?

We weren't planning to stop what we were doing.

But sometimes God uses those interruptions to help us show kindness.

Maybe justice looks like inviting someone to join a game.

Maybe it looks like standing up for someone being teased.

Maybe it looks like sharing, helping, or listening.

Jesus told a story today about people who needed to be ready for something important. One way we stay ready for God is by paying attention to the people around us.

Because when we see someone who needs kindness, God may be saying, "Stop for a moment. Help here."

Just like water keeps flowing, God's love keeps flowing. And God wants that love and fairness to flow through us too.

Let's pray:

Dear God, thank you for loving us. Help us notice when someone needs a friend. Help us be kind, fair, and brave. Let your love flow through us like a river. Amen.

Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten young women took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those young women got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

Later the other young women came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.'

Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Let Justice Interrupt Us

No one likes interruptions.

We like the predictable parts of life build because we want everything to make sense. We want to know what comes next. We want to believe that tomorrow will unfold in a foreseeable way.

And then something interrupts us: A phone call in the middle of the night… an unexpected diagnosis… a neighbor's pain that we cannot ignore. And suddenly the world is not the world we thought it was.

Interruptions open things up so we see the world in a new way.

Our stories of our faith are filled with people who think they know what God is doing. They believe they understand how the story will unfold. Until God interrupts them.

The people in Amos' time look towards "the day of the Lord." They assume it will be a day of victory when God shows up on their side and confirms everything they have been doing. They are complacent in their faith until God interrupts them through the prophet Amos: *"Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord."*

Amos describes impending disaster. Someone escapes a lion only to meet a bear. Someone reaches home safely, leans a hand against a wall, and is bitten by a snake.

The people think they are ready for God, but they are not. Even though they seem to do all the right things. The problem is not that they have abandoned their religious faith... They gather. They worship. They sing. They offer sacrifices and hold festivals. All in the name of God.

God responds: "I hate, I despise your festivals. I will not listen to the melody of your harps."

The people worship and praise God but their worship has become disconnected from justice.

> They praise God while ignoring their neighbors.
>
> They sing beautiful songs while people suffer.

Their religion has become something that happens in worship. God wants their faith to shape life.

God wants our faith to shape life too! It's not enough to profess our faith, cite scripture passages by heart and sing songs of praise. These are good things but not if we forget the calls for justice embedded in our faith. The mandate for radical hospitality, the call to welcome the immigrant, the expectation to include those who have been judged and shunned by the rest of society. We are called to love God and neighbor and enemy. We are called to make God the center of our lives. Too many find themselves in a void between faith and action... and they don't even know it.

Into the void God interrupts us today: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

God demands justice… not as an afterthought but as the center of our faith.

This interruption can make us uncomfortable. Faith can become familiar. We know the hymns and the prayers. We know the rhythms of worship. But Amos interrupts us with difficult questions:

- Does our worship change anything outside these walls?
- Does our love for God transform into love for all of our neighbors... no matter who they are?
- Does our faith move us toward those who are hurting or excluded, forgotten or afraid?

Amos insists that God cares deeply about what happens beyond the sanctuary doors. We are called to throw the doors open and let justice roll in.

Then Jesus tells a story about another interruption.

Ten bridesmaids wait for the bridegroom. All ten are invited. All ten are waiting. All ten grow tired. All ten fall asleep. Then, at midnight, the cry rings out: "Look! Here is the bridegroom!" and everything changes in an instant.

The night is interrupted and what matters suddenly becomes clear. When we hear this parable, we might wiggle in our pews, wondering if we are

ready to meet Christ. But the message is not about fear. It is about attentiveness.

Life with God requires us to be ready for the unexpected because the kingdom arrives on God's timetable, not ours.

Just when we think we know how the future will unfold, God does something unexpected.

- A movement for justice rises on the streets.
- A neglected voice is finally heard and listened to.
- A stranger becomes a friend.
- A community discovers courage it did not know it possessed.

The story of our faith is that God appears in places people least expect. Both Amos and Jesus describe people whose assumptions are interrupted.

So get ready! The moments of interruption reveal what really matters. Justice rolling down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

And perhaps justice is still God's great interruption. It interrupts our comfort and transforms systems that benefit some while harming others. Justice interrupts the temptation to look away when others are suffering. Then we will find ourselves by a steady, life-giving stream of justice that transforms communities and relationships.

The good news is that God's interruptions are not meant to destroy us. They are meant to wake us up. God interrupts because God refuses to accept a world marked by exclusion, violence, and oppression. God interrupts because love is always pushing toward healing. Because another world is possible. So get ready. Fill your lamps and trim your wicks. Open your lives to the God’s sacred interruptions, so that our faith will be transformed into action.

And when justice comes rushing like an ever-flowing stream, may we welcome it. May we join into this ancient movement for a just world. It is here that we will encounter the living heart of God.

Amen.