

So, let's acknowledge the elephant in the room shall we? It's been a long week, a long, arduous, exhausting week, and honestly I sermon write on Thursdays and at this particular moment in time the election still isn't decided and so it feels a little odd writing for Sunday, when everything is still very much up in the air. Still, even on Thursday, I have a feeling that come Sunday, we're all going to still be feeling it a little bit, so, if you're exhausted right now, if you're weary right now, if you're just plain done right now, that's ok, you can feel that deep into your bones. So, we refill the coffee cups and we take a deep breath and we look at the sunshine, and we say, for right now, for this time together, we've got this.

But ya know, one of the things, one of the narratives that I feel like always crops up during the election cycle is this undercurrent that it doesn't really matter. Between the electoral college and just the insanity of our political system, there's always that thin layer of cynicism that runs through that says, your vote doesn't matter, so why even bother? Or by all means vote, but at the end of the day, the outcome doesn't really impact *you*. We're a big nation with a complex government system and so what happens in DC takes a long time to trickle down and impact each of us on an individual level. And sometimes, when you're feeling overwhelmed and bleak with the world, you want to just buy into that right and say that it

doesn't matter because if it doesn't matter then it frees you from caring so much, feeling so much, worrying so much. Yet, we all know, at the end of the day, it matters. It beyond matters. It's why we mailed in ballots or showed up early or waited in lines. It's why we put on stickers and posted selfies and watched who knows how many hours of coverage. We did all of those things because we know that how we vote is representative of our thoughts, our feelings, our beliefs, of who we are, so we vote to express that, to live that out in a tangible way, because we know that those two things are intricately tied together, one impacts the other, and we wouldn't want to operate any other way. We wouldn't want to vote carelessly or ambivalently because that's not how we feel about the things our vote represents, so we take it seriously, and we feel it deeply, because we know the consequences of all of it and what it means to each of us individually.

We know this very tangibly when it comes to something like voting, like our politics. We want our vote to represent our feelings, our beliefs. We want our vote to match up with the things we say and the way we act and what we proclaim, and so we make sure that we do those things in sync and we take them both seriously because we know they're tied together. If we voted one way but then acted another, then what was the point? If we voted one way, but then professed adamant beliefs that seem contrary to that

vote, then what was the point? I think each of us, regardless of what our politics are, want to walk the walk of our political beliefs, not just talk the talk without any tangible action behind them.

We're very clear about that when it comes to politics, but when it comes to church? When it comes to our faith? I'm not so sure we always want to make that leap. When it comes to what we profess when it comes to our faith and then how we operate out in the world, well, sometimes it seems that we're ok with those two things not lining up together as much, we're ok with trying to convince ourselves that they aren't tied together. And the stark reality is...it's kind of always been that way, from time immemorial. Our first lesson makes that abundantly clear, even if this first lesson is really, really uncomfortable to sit with.

We all probably know and frankly love the last first of this lesson. We quote it all the time, we use it in memes and on social media as some like flagship saying of the Bible, to let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. And let's be real, it's a good verse. It sounds good. It's inspirational. It looks good on your Facebook wall...until you take it in the context of what comes before it.

God is ticked. There's really no way around it, there's no sugar coating this or trying to make it more palatable. God is angry, and lucky

Amos gets to be the one to give voice to that anger and present it to the people. But let's break down why, because this isn't God just throwing some toddler level temper tantrum, this is real, justified anger. Because here's what God sees happening...a people who are very, very focused on doing worship the "right" and proper way. People who put a lot of work and a lot of effort into their festival celebrations and making a show of bringing their offerings to the Temple. People who blow trumpets and proclaim in loud voices how much they love God. People who are quick to condemn others for not doing the same thing and putting as much oomph into their own worship life. People who declare that they are longing for the Day of the Lord, for the Lord to send the Messiah and save the world, who are allegedly longing for God to show up and change the world around.

And then God has the audacity to ask the really vital question...are you absolutely sure you want me to show up? Because I'm not sure you're really prepped for how that would go down. It wouldn't be a pleasant experience. It would be stark and harsh, because all of those things that you've been doing? All that worship you've been living into? You don't actually believe it. It's meaningless. It's practically pointless, because it has zero impact on the lives you're actually leading. You proclaim your love of God and then go out and treat God's children with ambivalence and disdain.

You proclaim your love of God and then let oppression and injustice be the dominant voice, the dominant power in the world. You proclaim your love of God, but are uninterested in living an actual life according to who God has called you to be, a person who cares for the widow, the orphan, the alien, a person who sees rampant poverty and inequality and speaks up and out against that injustice. You proclaim your love of God, but you only want that love for yourself. So, yeah, your worship life is great, but it means nothing, when it isn't backed up by actually living it out. If you want to actually *worship*, if you want to actually love, if you want to actually proclaim your faith then...let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

You have to imagine that the people of Amos' time were wildly uninterested in this message or at least deeply put off by it, because let's be honest...we don't want to hear it either. What we want to hear is that as long as we are showing up on Sundays, checking our box of weekly worship, and sending in our offerings then we are just one hundred percent, tip top living into our faith lives and the call that God has brought to us. We want to be like I am a Christian, check that box because I went to church on Sunday. Done! But when pressed, when pushed, when asked what being a Christian means in this world, when asked what it means to actually live

Christianity rather than just offer it lip service? Oh that's a conversation we don't really want to have, because then we're confronted with all of the ways that we are actually pretty uninterested in God's call.

We don't want to have honest conversations about what justice, what God's justice means, because it means having to confront the ways in which we have not stood up for the oppressed, it would actually force us to admit the ways in which we have actually been complicit in oppression, if not sometimes downright encouraging it. We don't want to talk about how our faith is supposed to inform our opinions about poverty and equality and fair treatment of others regardless of skin color, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. We don't want to talk about how our faith is supposed to be a shared call with Christ to seek out the lost, lonely, or forgotten, those that we have left on the margins of society and told they need to fend for themselves and pull themselves up by their bootstraps because it should just be that easy and simple. We don't want to talk about how faith should inform the way that we think about our relationships with others.

At the end of the day, we want to feel how we want to feel and act how we want to act and believe what we want to believe and then still come to worship on Sunday and feel like we've been Christlike that week. And I get it...we don't want to hear it, in the exact same way that people didn't

want to hear Amos, because to hear it is to be willing to be uncomfortable and unsettled by the reality of what our faith calls us to and how we don't always live into that. And no, we're not always going to get it right, we're not always going to do it perfectly, but at some point we decided that we don't even have to try anymore, because maybe it doesn't matter that what we say and what we do don't match up.

But it does matter...because if it didn't then why in the world did Jesus spend so much time preaching and teaching and calling people to action. If it didn't matter, Jesus wouldn't have spent time spinning parables about caring for your neighbor. If it didn't matter, Jesus wouldn't have spent so much time talking about forgiveness. If it didn't matter, Jesus wouldn't have lived a life that exemplified walking with the marginalized and oppressed. If it didn't matter, Jesus would have just said, go to worship and y'all will be good. It matters. What we say and what we do matters. What we profess has to be more than just bland lip service to what we *think* we should say. Our faith is more than just going through the motions and mumbling amen when we're supposed to. Our faith is meant to live and breathe and flow through the world. Maybe our faith lives need stickers. Maybe they should read, I pursued justice today. Maybe then, we'd actually do it, we'd actually believe it meant something. **AMEN!!!**