



## Wednesday Prayer

24<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – God in ritual or in chaotic waters?

**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 everflowing stream.**

**Amos 5:21-24**

My church is engaging in a 2-year exploration of what it means to become a public church. A place where faith and public life converge. In our first meetings together with a dozen or so churches engaging together on this exploration, we've asked many questions, unsure of where we're headed. First of all – Why?

I answered my "why" thinking about how so many of us are hurting and we need help in coming together and opening up to one another's stories, struggles, joys, needs, and what we each have to offer. And for those who want to seek God in that – for our church to be a space that's safe to explore this together. My faith and my belief in the purpose of the church are deeply rooted in the work of justice and righteousness.

How might our ideas of worship shift as we center ourselves on the needs of our neighbors? The prophet Amos shares God's intense anger over our ritual practices with strong language declaring "I hate, I despise your festivals...solemn assemblies...offerings...songs." Maybe it's that our purpose has been so focused on *our* experience within the walls of our sanctuaries that we've forgotten the true source of life and healing in community outside our walls? I've been defining "church" differently with my young adult children in their early 20's. They're not so interested in attending worship services these days, so I encourage their participation in activities of community-building and justice. I share with them that this is being the church out in the world. They understand this work of Cherish All Children and how they too, can engage their friends and family in building communities that are safe for all (online too!). Who are the young people in your life you can talk to about what it means to be church in the world?

**God, you call us into the chaotic waters of justice work. Justice rolling down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream are not meant to be gentle images in this context. Help us to be the church in the world, especially supporting young people through the mess and dangers, guiding them to do your work. Amen.**

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Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.

\*Cherish All Children is coordinating our LSS Metro Homeless Youth Services [Youth Holiday Gifts](#) program this season. Participate individually or as a congregation to support a young person!