"The Day of the Lord" ***Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18***

"(The Day of the Lord is) Israel's assertion that
the public life of the world is fully answerable to the personal rule of this God."
Walter Brueggemann, "The Day of the Lord" in Reverberations of Faith

Among many things that Judaism and Christianity hold in common is this. The expectation of the coming "Day of the Lord." In Judaism, Passover sets an extra place at the table and leaves a door open for Elijah. Why? Elijah's return will usher in the coming of God's Messiah. In Christianity, the Lord's Prayer invokes the coming of God's kingdom. From Zephaniah onward to Paul and the book of Revelation, the coming day of the Lord is an indispensable part of Judeo-Christian faith. Is it still?

In our time, "the day of the Lord" often suffers two fates. One is obsession with caricatures and abuses of that day. The second is neglect and dismissal of it ever coming. On the caricature/abuse continuum, "the day of the Lord" becomes a marketable commodity for end-times speculation that relishes themes of God's retribution. On the neglect/dismissal continuum, "the day of the Lord" gets reduced to an outworn relic of primitive faith by scoffing at any idea of God's intervention in human affairs. In my biased take, conservative or fundamentalist churches tend to veer into the first while modernist or progressive ones often opt into the second.

Both sides neglect the core function of "the day of the Lord" in faith. While the Biblical imagery connected to this day varies widely, one thing is clear. The sovereignty of God. Because of that, beliefs about the future are not to be an excuse for Christian escapism, content to leave the world going to you-know-where in a handbasket while we sit idly by and wait for the Rapture. Similarly, God is NOT as the Enlightenment once conjectured a clockmaker who wound up the universe and got it started, then like Elvis left the building, indifferent to what happens here next.

The Biblical proclamation of a coming "day of the Lord" remains vital to faithful living. It provides hope when life seems to be unraveling, whether in personal or societal terms. In such times, "the day of the Lord" provides an anchor for trust AND an ethical compass. For if the future does indeed belong to God, then it behooves us to live in this day by the qualities God has revealed by those who awaited this day before us. To do justice. To love kindness. To humbly walk with God. And in all those: to love. The day of the Lord assures: such living is not in vain.

For Reflection and Action:
What teachings about "the day of the Lord" do you find most or least helpful; why?
How would you describe your views of where the future is headed?
What might a visitor to OSLC learn of our church's take on "the day of the Lord:"
From our liturgy; from our budget; from our mission activities?