



Just Peace Sunday 2020

Theme: “Seeking Racial Equity and a Just Economy”

Welcome

This morning’s worship calls us to continue on a course of justice and peace laid down in the foundational story of Exodus, the aspirational words of the prophets, the teachings and passion of Jesus, the courage of the apostles and the faith ministry of the Church. Just Peace isn’t a destination, but the path to the prophet’s envisioned “Beloved Community”. The challenge is to faithfully examine ourselves, our community and our culture for the thorns of racial inequity and economic injustice that choke off the sprouting harvest of God’s Spirit. We need to sort the seed from the thistle. Our need for justice and peace is as urgent today as in the Pharaoh’s brick yards of Exodus.

Call to Worship

We keep sabbath, during this strange season of the Coronavirus, in uncomfortable new ways: in masks or by digital devices; without handshakes or hugs. But the Church has survived wars and pandemics, financial crisis and civil unrest, relying on the promise that wherever two or more gather in the name of Christ, there the Spirit of Christ will be found.

It’s times like these, the Spirit is most needed. The work not done; God’s reign’s not yet come. So, let’s gather in the name of Jesus. Let’s proclaim it from our pulpits, whisper into our masks, sing it in front of our computers and know that all over the world the Spirit of God is molding us... shaping us... recreating us into the Body of Christ.

Alternative Responsive Prayers

1st Voice: We spend too much energy in the pursuit of accumulating and not enough in appreciating.

All Voices: We take for granted our most profound blessings while focusing our attention on that which contributes little to Your Beloved Community.

2nd Voice: We chase trinkets and ignore treasures.

All Voices: We cling to grudges and Your grace eludes us.

1st Voice: We are quick to choose sides and slow to look for common ground.

2nd Voice: Help us better know what is valuable.

All Voices: Help us to find our way back when we are blown off your course.

Responsive Prayer

Leader: At the foot of Mt. Sinai Moses told the people it was time to choose; would they worship the golden idols of Egypt where they were slaves, or would they worship Yahweh who had just freed them from pharaoh.

People: As for me and my household, we shall worship the Lord.

Leader: Nathan stood before David and demanded he choose; would he worship power that came with the throne or would he worship the Lord that had saved him from the hands of his enemies.

People: As for me and my household, we shall worship the Lord.

Leader: Jesus passed the cup of Passover to his disciples and told them it was time to choose; would they worship the traditions of their ancestors or the living God who made a place for them and all people at the table.

People: As for me and my household, we shall worship the Lord.

Leader: The Spirit asks us to choose; shall we worship a culture of power, plenty and privilege that tells us to be afraid of the other, or the Child of God who lived faithfully and fearlessly welcoming all people into the loving household of God

People: As for me and my household, we shall worship the Lord!

Responsive Reading

Single Voice: The church has been the home of your holy peace and justice. We find it woven throughout Your scriptures, carved into our traditions, planted in our hearts.

Many Voices: Into the fertile soil of the Church the sacred seed of Good News is planted. From this garden we feast on the fruit of shalom.

Single Voice: Each generation passes Your shalom to their children and grandchildren.

Many Voices: Your justice and peace are the rock on which we stand, the foundation of the home in which we live.

Single Voice: The responsibility of your church is to carry your wholeness into every arena of human endeavor.

Many Voices: To seats of government and hospital operating rooms; to classroom of our universities and boardrooms or our industry; to our playing fields and battle fields.

Single Voice: To every experience of human accomplishment and brokenness...

Many Voices: For Your righteous peace is the Good News and we are the messengers of Your coming reign.

Prayer of Confession

1st Voice: We are all born into cultural currents that reward some...

2nd Voice: And penalizes others, merely for the color of their skin.

All: Some of us benefit from generations of accumulated wealth. Others of us stagger under the burden of generations of racial oppression, discrimination, and bias.

1st Voice: Where I've felt welcome...

2nd Voice: I felt shut out.

1st Voice: Where I was invited to join...

2nd Voice: I was told I didn't belong.

1st Voice: Where others have been willing to invest in me...

2nd Voice: My gifts have been consistently undervalued.

1st Voice: Where I've been asked to share my thoughts...

2nd Voice: I've been told to keep quiet.

1st Voice: Where I've found opportunity...

2nd Voice: I've run into barricades.

1st Voice: For over 200 years, this country has struggled to live up to the aspirational equality written into our founding documents.

2nd Voice: For over 2000 years, the Church has struggled to live into the promise of the Gospel's Beloved Community.

All: It is too easy to swim with the toxic cultural currents that ultimately drown both the oppressed and the privileged in the lie that the value of a person can be determined by the color of their skin.

Forgive us for our complicity and collusion to this damaging lie.

Redeem us, by stirring up Your Spirit which has turned tides of subjugation, injustice and oppression in days past.

Restore in us the determination to join in the holy work of reconciliation by pulling up the pernicious thorns of white supremacy and sowing seeds of economic justice.

Assurance of Pardon

2nd Voice: Our worth is not determined by how the world judges us or how much the economy values us.

1st Voice: Our worth is neither increased or diminish by our deeds, our impairments, our productivity or our failures.

All: Our worth is determined by the price God paid for us; for while we were still sinners Christ died for us and for the world. For God so loves the world that He sent His only Son to die for us. When we confess and repent of our sins God forgives us.

Scripture Readings

Exodus 16:2-15

² In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³ The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” ⁸ Moses also said, “You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.”

⁹ Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

¹⁰ While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, ¹² “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”

¹³ That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.

Psalm 105:1-6, 37-44

¹ Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

² Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.

³ Glory in his holy name;

let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
⁴ Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.
⁵ Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
⁶ you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.

³⁷ He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold,
and from among their tribes no one faltered.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they left,
because dread of Israel had fallen on them.
³⁹ He spread out a cloud as a covering,
and a fire to give light at night.
⁴⁰ They asked, and he brought them quail;
he fed them well with the bread of heaven.
⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed like a river in the desert.
⁴² For he remembered his holy promise
given to his servant Abraham.
⁴³ He brought out his people with rejoicing,
his chosen ones with shouts of joy;
⁴⁴ he gave them the lands of the nations,
and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—
⁴⁵ that they might keep his precepts
and observe his laws.
Praise the LORD.^[a]

Philippians 1:21-30

²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²²If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Life Worthy of the Gospel

²⁷Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit,^[a] striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Matthew 20

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius^[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

¹³ “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

¹⁶ “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Offering

God invites us to join “Kingdom” work. Some of us come early, others of us come late. But, we’re all surprised to find there’s as much blessing in the work as in the reward. This is the work that gives our lives purpose and meaning. The time, treasures and talents invested in the fields of God bear eternal fruit. Let us answer God’s call by sharing in this holy work.

Dedication Prayer of Thanksgiving

Single Voice: Join me in lifting to God our prayer of thanksgiving.

Every Voice: God receive these symbols of our devotion and thanksgiving. As we dedicate these offerings to You, transform them into the tools of your harvest. Send us into your fields grateful that You haven’t left us to the brokenness of personal sin or the mire of collective injustice. Transform us into agents of Your Just Peace.

Passing of the Peace

There is a Tamil greeting, Santōṣaṁ vaṇakkāṁ which can be translated, “I see God in you”.

They put their hands together in a prayerful gesture, bow their heads slightly as they share the

greeting. Our scripture tells us that we are all created in the image of God and to be in Christ means to share God's common Spirit. This Just Peace Sunday, during a time of social distancing, it would be an appropriate way to acknowledge that those around you with the gesture respectful acknowledgement and the affirming words, "I See God in You." Responding with, "And I in you."

Closing

May the Word spoken and heard by us here, now be translated into action as we become the agents of God's Just Peace. Let's actively engage in the creation of God's intended community of racial equity and economic justice; knowing this is what makes God smile.

Benediction

May Christ's example inspire you. May God's Spirit empower you. May God's blessing surround you, rest gently upon you and protect you from the winds of the world's thorns of racism and thistles of injustice.