

Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice

Jesus, on this first Sunday of Advent we take time to reflect on Your coming...a coming of God to earth to rid the world of false representations of the One who has loved from the beginning of time. We heard last week that what you came to do, Jesus, was to bear witness to the truth...to state in so many different ways that God's love for each one was the truth upon which this world was built and that that love translates into justice, peace and hope. In Your coming, Jesus, you showed us time and time again that Your world was in contrast to the dominant culture in which we find ourselves. We light this Candle of Peace and Justice every Sunday to remind ourselves that Your coming always brings hope in the midst of cruel systemic injustice, violence and despair. Sunday after Sunday, in this church, we have been invited to think deeply about how You lived in Your time on earth...to consider our posture towards those who are marginalised, to think carefully about socio-economic justice and to consider all as our family. And so we approach this time of Advent with wonder and joy at Your coming, Your "justice, peace and hope" coming.

But something is seriously wrong, Jesus, something jars. How is it that we have ended up celebrating Your coming in ways that can only be abhorrent to You? The celebration has become about eating vast amounts of food, ploughing lots of money into shops that profit the rich, teaching children that Your coming is about them stocking up on their toys. We find ourselves describing this season as the "silly season" where everything is frantic and filled with the stress of going into debt to fulfil expectations that seem to grow more demanding each year. How is any of this about You?

As we ask these questions, we realise how easily we have become complicit in the ways of this world...ways that You never aligned Yourself to, that You exposed as being in opposition to God's world. We look at our behaviour, our values, our choices and we realise that following you requires us to turn around and swim upstream in the opposite direction, a direction that makes us confront our people-pleasing, our fear of rocking the family traditions and expectations and our fear of missing out.

Will You forgive us, Jesus? Will You forgive us our betrayal of You, our undermining of the justice, peace and hope You brought? May we re-imagine Christmas and how we celebrate Your coming. May we truly follow You when everything is urging us to conform. May we choose, because we can, to live out Your advent with a deep, residing joy.

Amen

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