

Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice

I don't know about you but I am on the edge of despair, almost at the point of accepting that we are powerless to do anything as South Africa seems to be sliding relentlessly towards being a failed state and all that goes with it. We are all so aware of all the contributing factors that the media is constantly screaming at us, so I have no intention of repeating it all now. This candle behind me represents justice, peace and the hope that we can always turn to in the darkness and I hope you will join me today in finding some of it and bringing it to God.

I have been inspired by two people in the last week who are standing up and offering hope at this time.

The well-known Jay Naidoo, the founding general secretary of Cosatu and a former minister in Nelson Mandela's government is currently actively using his influence to try and steer the country towards a new way of being. He reminds us of the time in the late 80s and early 90s when church and business combined their efforts to mediate as honest brokers in a system that was rapidly disintegrating into warlordism, a failed state and a quagmire of despair. Does How this description sound familiar right now.

He reminds us of the rising of the National Peace Accord, an intentional and purposeful servant leadership, which, as he put it, "choreographed a massive mobilisation of society and united our country and underpinned the values of integrity, ethics, sacrifice, innovation and volunteerism. He goes on to say that "we need a new vision – in our country and in the world. The way we make decisions cannot be based on fear, patronage and coercion, nor held together by political, economic and military power. We will rise united as a nation but we need an authentic intergenerational dialogue and intelligent collaboration."

[Songezo Zibi](#), former editor of Business Day, spoke recently at a conference, suggesting that South Africa needs a new leadership vision, no longer trying to sustain one that is fruitlessly trying to be resuscitated in an intensive care unit. He makes several key recommendations, the detail of which is important reading but the relevance here is that here is another one of many people with influence at a national level, actively looking to lead us as a country towards solutions.

Interestingly, one of the scriptures for this week is from Habakuk who, addressing his country at his time, says, "How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

God then speaks and Habakuk replied, a bit like Job, saying, "GOD, I've heard what our ancestors say about you, and I'm stopped in my tracks, down on my knees. Do among us what you did among them. Work among us as you worked among them. And as you bring judgment, as you surely must, remember mercy."

Please join me, with Habakuk, as we pray into a very similar situation.

Please start with me, God, with your mercy. Show me where I carry in me the influence of greed, patronage, fear, and coercion? I confess to you my own greed; the times I take or buy more than I need; the times when I deny others what I could have shared. I see too the seeds of my own forms of patronage, when I act out of debt to others instead of being motivated by what is right. I lay down before you also the times I act under the influence of fear and coercion – fear of what others may think, fear of uncomfortable consequences for me.

And as we do this for ourselves, we ask for your courage to be instilled in the many people in this country who are already addressing this, in a variety of ways. We have so often, from this very platform, acknowledged the journalists and the whistle-blowers – courageous in the obvious areas but also in ways that we will possibly never fully understand. We acknowledge them again and ask for your strengthening and encouragement.

We bring before you too, the wide array of people, both in government and in the private sectors, both formal and informal, and at varying levels of influence, who are standing up, at personal cost, and challenging the status quo; the people who are shining lights in the many corners of darkness, helping us to see what would otherwise remain hidden. We ask too for courage, strength, clarity of vision and purpose and for a spirit of collaboration with others.

And finally, we bring to you all those leaders, like Zibi and Naidoo, across the generations, with local, regional and national influence, who are busy gathering to steer this country in a new direction. Give them courage, wisdom and strength as they navigate a new way. Lead them in the way of peace and righteousness, that once again, this country can triumph over what is trying so hard to destroy it.

And as we ask this, we sum it all up in our overarching prayer for a world that so desperately needs your ways to triumph once again.

God bless Africa and all the world, guard our children, guide our leaders, and give us peace. Amen

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