

## **Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice**

The world is a very angry place at the moment and South Africa is right up there with it. We are an angry country, so much of it rooted in the wide range of injustices experienced constantly by its citizens. And it's not surprising because a sense of justice is built into our design, making us keenly aware of any sense of unfairness coupled with a desire to have this addressed.

At a very public level so many in this country are following the extraordinary strategies of people like Adv Mkwabane and Mr Zuma to avoid facing justice. Millions of people have suffered injustice generated by their individual decisions and actions alone, and with this comes an anger and desperation to see justice done. How many lives have been lost because of crooked cops facilitating transfer of firearms to criminals. Will justice be seen to be done for the devastation this has wreaked in so many individual families. Coming closer to home, how many people suffer ongoing injustice at the hands of an unreasonable boss, a partner, a parent? What about unfair discrimination due to race, gender, age, gender orientation, culture, religion, and more? We can be destroyed by the hurt and rage generated by injustice as so many are. We could however follow the example of Jesus by turning, as the psalmist said, to a God who is a rock of refuge to who we can come, again and again. Please join me as we do this.

We come to you this morning, oh God of beautiful righteousness and justice. You are the one who, incarnated to live like us, modelled perfectly a godly approach to injustice, to both others and to ourselves.

For others, you confronted injustice at every turn, challenging it for what it truly was, whether seen or unseen. In small interpersonal encounters you challenged attitudes and beliefs of those who considered themselves pillars of righteousness; in those about to stone the woman caught in adultery, in those about to throw out the woman who washed and dried your feet with her tears and hair. You challenged the religious leaders of the day, speaking about the gross injustices perpetuated by their misrepresentation of you to the communities they were supposed to serve. In a righteous rage, you overturned the tables of religious and economic abuse in the temple and, at huge risk to yourself, you even challenged the oppressive government leaders of the day.

Yet, whilst you fought fiercely for others, when it came to injustice towards yourself, your response was remarkable. As you suffered rejection and misrepresentation as part of your everyday life, you never fought for yourself but rather repeatedly entrusted yourself to the only one who could truly save you. When they hurled their insults at you, you didn't retaliate; when you suffered, you made no threats. Knowing full well where your challenge to religious and governmental injustice would lead, you pressed on, regardless. In the ultimate challenges of your last few days, you agonised in Gethsemane to a point of acceptance, bracing yourself to face your torturers for an indescribable assault on your body, mind and spirit. And, in your final unfathomable response to personal injustice, you asked for forgiveness for the people who were not only excruciatingly painfully nailing you to a piece of wood but also committing possibly the greatest injustice of all time.

So, holy and truly awesome God, we lie face down at your feet, acknowledging your greatness in what you did in facing injustice during your time of incarnation. You are truly an example like no other and we fully acknowledge that being like you in this way is far beyond our human abilities. We fail in so many ways. In confronting injustice towards others, we so easily shy away from it often just because it may make people not like us or perhaps cause an uncomfortable vibe. And yet, when encountering injustice towards ourselves, we are the first to jump up and down with indignation and rage, demanding justice and fairness in everyone's dealings with us.

So, we bring to you our leaders all around us, from top leaders in government, industry and civil society right through to leaders of just one or two people. We pray especially for all those of us who still have eyes to see the injustice around us and where we have influence to address it. We ask for courage beyond our ability to do what we know needs to be done. We ask too for strengthening of ourselves to behave as you did in response to what may be thrown at us. At a level closer to home, we bring to you partners, work colleagues, parents, siblings and even children. Shine a light on the injustices we commit that we might see them for what they are and change our ways. Show us too how we could respond more like you as we experience injustice directed at us and, please God, don't just show us how we could be more like you but lead us to the sources of empowering to do so.

In this country, in this world, more than ever, we need people, moulded and shaped by you, in the fight against, so we pray together.

God bless Africa and all the world,  
Guard our children  
Guide our leaders  
And give us peace.  
Amen