Prayers for Peace, Hope and Justice: God of the Weak

You'd think that a prayer for peace, hope and justice would be easy to put together in these times we are living in- everywhere we look and listen, there are stories of tragedy, pain, violence, and sometimes quite unbelievable corruption and injustice- these are all represented by the barbed wire surrounding our candle. And yet, I struggled. And I wondered why. I wondered if it was because what makes the headlines day in and day out is more of the same- more violent crime, more war and conflict, more senseless profanity out of the mouth of the US president, more wealth and power to the wealthy and powerful, more health crises, more greed, more destruction of Mother Earth…it felt like I would just be pushing the replay button. And I wondered if it was perhaps that I/we are becoming numb to these same headlines, and so almost subconsciously put them to the back of my/our minds, preferring not to confront and acknowledge the traumatic impact they are having on our world. And I even wondered if it was perhaps because part of me felt like the light trying to fight the darkness was only the tiniest of flickering flames, struggling not to be suffocated by all the barbs of the wire. Heartache and pain can, and have, become overwhelming…is there really hope for the oppressed and exploited, the poor and the weak and the downtrodden, for the meek and the mourning? And then Mary's Song, so beautifully recorded in Luke, came to mind. Her beautiful prophecy of God's dream for the world, and God's promises for those regarded as the weakest and the least, put into song while she carried the great Light of the world.

And so let us pray.

Saviour God, these times and this world overwhelm us, and burden our hearts. Deathly choices are made daily by political powers, by greedy corporates, by the wealthiest individuals, by those meant to protect society, and too often by those of us sitting here today. Your blueprint of your people living in shalom with each other, choosing grace, mercy and compassion, kindness and love, over greed, power and exploitation of others has been ripped apart. Your dream of your people living as one lies in ruins. Our doubts and insecurities have threatened who we are, have clouded our identities, and have made us forget that you dwell in us all. They have separated us from others, from ourselves, and from you. We no longer remember that we are all family, that we all belong to each other.

And while we might sometimes feel there is no hope for peace and justice, you never do. You gave us your Light to show us an alternative way of living. Jesus broke the bonds of evil, violence, revenge, power and death by choosing forgiveness and gentleness; by refusing to dehumanise and humiliate others; by being Love, and Love for all. He showed us that despite all the fear and chaos in the world, all things can be made new. Thank you, gracious God, that even when we feel at our weakest, you are always ready, always waiting to fill us with strength

and courage to challenge the powerful. Thank you that you have given the keys of the kingdom of heaven to those who choose to follow the ways of Jesus- to free people from the bonds of evil, lies, deception and injustice, to give a voice to the voiceless, to stand up to the giants and bullies in the world. God of mercy, soften the hearts of those in power, those with so much wealth they could fill every empty tummy in the world. Change how they use their power and their money, so that it is not used to dominate or humiliate. May they rather find purpose and fulfilment in sharing what they have, and empowering others to reach their full potentials.

At the same time, guard our hearts from wanting to fight the powers with power, and the forceful with force, but remind us that blessed are the meek. Guard our hearts from clinging onto any power we may have and remind us to surrender to your way of living.

And now, perhaps at a time when we need it the most, remind us of your promise that you are a friend of the lowly, and God of the weak. That the thrones of the powerful will crumble and the humble will lead. That the overprivileged will be left empty handed, and those will nothing will be filled. That the arrogant, abusive and oppressors will be scattered, and the gentle and faithful will be surrounded by your compassion. That the proud and greedy will be brought down low, and the unnoticed will be noticed, and will rise up on wings like eagles. That mourning will be turned into joy. Jesus, you ask who do we say you are. Right now, despite the barbed wire, we boldly declare that you are Messiah, and that your Love and Light will reign over all nations forever.
Amen.

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