



PEACE IS DOING, NOT WAITING

Friday, October 2

Peace in the World

Liberty and Justice for All

Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle

Amos 5:23-24

“Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.” (NRSV)

Reflection: I am reflecting on justice, long before you will read it, and wonder whether we will remember the intensity of this moment.

I am reflecting on justice while people across the United States and around the world are filling the streets, in outrage following the death of George Floyd, who was murdered when a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into Floyd’s neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. Part of what is fueling those protests are the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, who was shot and killed in Brunswick, Ga., while jogging, and Breonna Taylor, who was shot eight times and killed by police officers when they burst into her apartment in Louisville, Ky., in a case of mistaken identity. What meaning can peacemaking possibly have in such a circumstance — other than to unravel these patterns of violence and replace injustice with justice?

I am reflecting on justice only days after the president of the United States instructed his attorney general to clear the streets of peaceful protesters, which was done by the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, mounted police and police batons used to push people from Lafayette Park. This was done so the president could stand in front of a church he did not enter and hold up a Bible from which he did not read! God will have none of such noise and melodies.

But, if you listen to and remember the chants that have risen from the streets of this country, you will hear what justice means. Justice means the full enforcement of the provision of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees “equal protection under the law.” Justice means the full embrace of the language of the Pledge of Allegiance’s promise of “liberty and justice for all.” Justice means not only living up to the language in the Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal,” but also agreeing that the promise extends to men, women, nonbinary people, and indeed to all people, regardless of creed, color or identity.



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Justice is necessary for peace.

As we consider making peace in the world, we must remember too that the wider world has wisdom for peacemaking that applies to us. The United States, just like ancient Israel, is guilty of ignoring its own foundational laws that were designed to create a just and equitable society. Even as we may protest and boycott systems of oppression and apartheid in the world, we must have the humility to accept similar judgment.

Justice and peace cannot come, at home or abroad, unless we live up to our highest ideals of equality and self-improvement. In order to build peace, it is time that we do justice.

Practice for Peacemakers: Consider the ways in which self-glorification gets in the way of justice in your life, and in the life of our country as a force for or against peace. Reread the Declaration of Independence (or the Bill of Rights, or another founding document) and reflect on the aspirations and the failures of the vision for justice at that point in time. Where have we failed to realize the vision's original potential, and where have we moved that vision forward? Write down your thoughts and share them with others in your church or community, asking them to do the same. Then use those thoughts as a starting point in your local activism.

Prayer: Dear God, as we strive to be peacemakers in your world, remind us to listen. Let us not sing songs of self-praise, but instead let your justice roll over us like an ever-flowing stream, guiding us on a path that washes away the structures and systems which hold injustice in place.



Now retired and living happily in Shaker Heights, OH, the Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle served for many years in different roles: as president, as professor of African American religious studies, and as director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School.