

Justice

[A week of devotions reflecting on God's justice and our action](#)

Lent is a time of self-reflection, repentance, and renewal. As we pray, give and fast together, let's remember Jesus' victory over sin and death, and call on his saving power to bring about justice for the first peoples of Australia.

Day 1: Enough

Read

Exodus 16:4-8, 13-18

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" ⁸ Moses also said, "You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord."

¹³ That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer^[a] for each person you have in your tent.'"

¹⁷ The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. ¹⁸ And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

Reflect

Food is an important part of the Christian journey: the service of communion, an act of care to the sick, a shared egg sandwich with fellow believers! The provision of food is one reminder of God's love for us. In 2016, Aboriginal children in Australia experienced 1.7 times higher levels of malnutrition than non-Indigenous children.

Consider/act

How can we respond to the injustices of our time? It is clear from scripture that religious piety is not enough, we are called to break the bonds of injustice and share our bread.

Loving God, sustainer of all, help us to be thankful for your generosity in our lives and to share what we have with those in need. Amen.

Day 2: Life

Read – John 3:1-17

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[c] must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”^[d]

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^[e] ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[f] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”^[g]

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Reflect – As we grow older, birthdays are often ignored by their owner, “this year I am not going to grow older thanks!”. This luxury is afforded to the fortunate in our country. In 2018, the overall death rate for Aboriginal Australians was almost twice the rate for non-Indigenous Australians.

Consider/act – The Aboriginal community have asked the Government for access to effective culturally safe health services. Do you feel confident to talk up for Aboriginal health to your local politician, neighbour or friend?

Loving God, healer of all, help us to be ambassadors for healing in the lives of those around us. Amen.

Day 3: Known

Read

2 Timothy 10-17

¹⁰ You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Reflect

Do you have memories of a primary or Sunday school teacher who made a big impact on your life? A good start to education and learning can have an accumulated positive effect on someone. Barriers to Indigenous children's participation in early childhood education include out of pocket costs, lack of public transport, poor child health, and fear of racism and judgment.

Consider/Act

Why is it often easier to know what to do, than to put things in to action? If during lent you feel prompted to share what you have learnt with others, or put good ideas in to practice – are you going to do it?

Loving God, teacher of all, help us to lean on your holy scriptures as the source of perfect correction and righteousness. Amen.

Day 4: Mercy

Read – Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[b]”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Reflect – As Francis of Assisi said, “Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible”. Personal ambitions can be held back suddenly by accidents, declining mental health and the need to care for others. More than twice as many Aboriginals report living with a disability than non-indigenous persons.

Consider/Act – As with the Good Samaritan, we need the stranger to show us what real hospitality is all about. The community receives great value from providing for people living with a disability or mental health injury.

Loving God, saviour of all, thank you for coming to us as a stranger and binding our wounds so that we might know your love. Amen.

Day 5: Shelter

Read

Isaiah 58:6-12

⁶ "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice

and untie the cords of the yoke,

to set the oppressed free

and break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry

and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—

when you see the naked, to clothe them,

and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn,

and your healing will quickly appear;

then your righteousness^[a] will go before you,

and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;

you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

"If you do away with the yoke of oppression,

with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

¹⁰ and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry

and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,

then your light will rise in the darkness,

and your night will become like the noonday.

¹¹ The Lord will guide you always;

he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land

and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,

like a spring whose waters never fail.

¹² Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins

and will raise up the age-old foundations;

you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,

Restorer of Streets with Dwellings

Reflect

Many would agree with Jennifer Aniston when she said that "Parenting is one of the hardest jobs on earth"! The rewarding challenge of caring for children is something that requires great amounts of patience and wisdom. Rates of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care have tripled in the past 15 years. Acting early to prevent childhood abuse and neglect is

incredibly important, but with Aboriginal children 10 times more likely to be removed from their family than non-indigenous children, there is a clear need for a more just approach.

Consider/Act

Aboriginal communities have asked to share in decision-making about things that affect them, and this arguably needs to be extended to the provision of social services. It is our joy and privilege as representatives of Jesus to work with children and vulnerable people, and that is why we embrace the Safe Church Communities training and Faithfulness in Service code of conduct.

Loving God, father of all, help us to make our church communities places of safety and bless those who care for children. Amen

Day 6: Visit

Read – Matthew 25:31-40

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Reflect – The words of Zechariah in chapter 9 describing God's people as "prisoners of hope" sums up neatly the human condition of being both restrained by sin, yet deeply hopeful for release from its painful burden. Incarceration too has serious and long-term effects on people, affecting the health, wellbeing and economic livelihoods of prisoners/detainees and their families. In 2016, the rate of detention for Aboriginal children was 26 times that of non-Indigenous youth.

Consider/Act – As Jesus visited us despite our transgressions, so we must provide an example of love and forgiveness to our neighbour. Is your Parish prepared to accept an ex-offender into your community? How would you do it?

Loving God, judge to all, help us to recognise our own transgressions and extend understanding, forgiveness and love to those around us. Amen

Day 7: Awake

Read

Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Reflect – Gloria Steinem once said that “There is a naïve belief that injustice only had to be pointed out in order to be cured”. Wouldn’t it be great, for example, if violence could be ended just by recognising that it exists! Although most Australian families are strong and healthy, some are at risk of family and community violence, and the impact can be far reaching. In 2019, Aboriginal people over 15 years were three times more likely to be a victim of physical violence or threatened harm.

Consider/Act – The building of healthy communities leads to improvements in people’s long-term health and physical and mental wellbeing. Are you ready to listen to and care for those affected by violence in our community?

Loving God, light to all, please repel the darkness in our lives this lent and wake us up to the power of the risen Christ. Amen