

A Meditation on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

From the speech, "Where do we go from here?" 1967

The long arc of the universe bends toward justice.

Justice is the goal,

God's justice is the purpose.

Justice. Fairness. Impartiality. Equity.

It makes things right.

It restores the balance that God intends

between people and God,

people and other people,

people and all creation.

"Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue,
so that you may live and occupy the land
that the Lord your God is giving you."

(Deuteronomy 16:20)

"Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed."
(Isaiah 59:1)

"Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
(Amos 5:24)

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice,
and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"
(Micah 6:8)

"Will you strive for justice and peace among all people
and respect the dignity of every human being?"
(The Baptismal Covenant)

Justice is at the heart of God's call to us,
And the at heart of our response.
It is at the heart of our civic life, too.

"One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"
(The Pledge of Allegiance)

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect
Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the
common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings
of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this
Constitution for the United States of America."
(The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States)

Justice is the beating heart of who we are
as Christians,
as Americans,
and it is a heart attacked,
a heart arrested,
torn, divided.
Justice has become a byword,
the appeal to justice a flashpoint.
"Justice is equity."
"Justice is punishment."
So two reject common ground,
hurling insults, despising one another,
denying justice over the meaning of justice.
The heart is broken.
God's heart breaks.

God, show us your justice,
Justice among us,
Justice between us,
Justice for all.

Pour down your justice upon us.

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Empower us to work tirelessly for justice.

Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Keep us thankful for the witness of your great prophet, preacher and herald of justice, Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Now, we got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Where do we go from here? 1967

"For I the Lord love justice."

(Isaiah 61:8a)