



**Worship Service Theme: Justice
(near Martin Luther King Holiday)**

Helpful Elements:

Green tablecloth (Ordinary Time)
Large photo of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, we're looking at the theme of **justice**. Thank you for joining us, and please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Amazing Grace

First reading: From the Old Testament prophet Amos; chapter 5

Seek good, and not evil,

that you may live;

and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you,

as you have said.

¹⁵ Hate evil, and love good,

and establish justice in the gate.

...

Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,

I will not look upon them.

²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs;

to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Matthew 23:1-3, 23

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, ³ so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but they do not practice. ...

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.”

Also from another Old Testament prophet: Micah 6:8:

“God has shown you, O people, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do *justice*, to love *mercy*, and to *walk humbly* with your God?”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let’s talk more about justice.

- What does justice mean to you?
 - fairness, rightness, not trampling on others, taking care of others who can’t take care of themselves, speaking up for what’s right
- Whose job is it to make justice happen?
 - Our legal system: judges, courts, juries
 - All of us! Everyday dealings, fairness
- What kind of people need justice?
 - The poor, oppressed by governments or other forces, weak, disabled, refugees ...
 - What do all these people have in common?
 - NEED; powerless
- I wonder if any of you have ever given money to a cause you believe in – examples? How did you choose those causes or organizations?
- Why should we be fair to others?
 - Golden Rule – what we would want for ourselves
 - We ourselves need mercy; we have all made mistakes
- Spiritual teachers and authors Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat put it this way: “Doing justice is a central imperative [in all religions]. This practice applies to the whole range of human interactions, and today it is also being extended to animals and the environment. It means that we deal fairly with others, recognizing the equality and dignity of all. It requires that we work

to insure that all people, especially the poor and the weak, have access to opportunities. It assumes that none of us is free until all of us are.”¹

Let’s pray together and thank God for both justice and mercy.

(Silent Prayer) Lord, receive our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

This is My Father’s World

It is Well with My Soul

Standing on the Promises

Third Reading: Excerpts from Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” Speech, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, August 28, 1963 [bracketed section may be omitted]

“We have ... come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. ... Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children. ...

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; ‘and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.’

... With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail

¹ *Spiritual Rx*, by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, p. 141.

together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.”

Suggested Hymns:

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
Shall We Gather at the River**

Fourth Reading: Quotes on Justice

“In trying to think about how we can make a difference, we must not ignore the small daily differences we can make, which, over time, add up to big differences we cannot foresee.” –Marian Wright Edelman, American activist and founder of the Children’s Defense Fund

“The fabric of American society must be rewoven one loving stitch at a time: one child read to, one sick person prayed for, one elder given respect and made to feel needed, one prisoner rehabilitated, one mourner given comfort.” –Marianne Williamson, Unity Church minister

“May we be helped to do whatever is most right.” –Native American prayer

Suggested Hymns:

**Blest Be the Tie that Binds
I Need Thee Every Hour**

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise