



**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 your Holy Spirit to 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 that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting "The Lord is My Shepherd" 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 shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 4

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

First reading: This is from the fifth chapter of the Old Testament prophet Amos:

¹⁴ 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.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Oh, How I love Jesus, p. 7

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 8

Second reading: This is from the twenty-third chapter of Matthew's gospel:

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. ⁴ They tie up heavy

burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

[Jesus also addressed the religious rulers directly, saying:]

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."

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

Hymns:

His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 9

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 10

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; they are powerless
- What can we do when we see injustice around us? ¹
 - Remember who we are, who we belong to, where our identity lies, the identity that shapes our choices and behaviors.
 - "We are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20). We belong to Jesus; we are on mission, with Him. This is who we are. This is what we're doing here. No matter how weird things get.

¹ Profound thanks to Gayll Phifer-Houseman, The River Church Community, January 10, 2021.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmZfn5-Nehw&feature=youtu.be> (starting at 16:30)

- How do we recover that sense of identity, that we belong to God? What helps you remember who you are?²
 - Remind each other! That’s why we gather. We remember our commitments and practices as a community.
 - “Refuse to cooperate with the identity thieves of disgust, cynicism, and despair. We buddy up to these reactions out of self-protection; but often the end result is just increasing despair and disconnection for ourselves.”
 - “This is truly a grievous moment, but we can’t let that legitimate grief steal or shut down our identity in Jesus as his ambassadors. Don’t hand your identity to thieves! Cultivate hope, forgiveness, prayer. Ultimately, be the church you want to see in the world.”
 - Redirect our energies toward the coming of Jesus’ rule and reign wherever we are.
 - “Pray for 5.” Pray daily for 5 people who need God.
 - Bless others. You are sent by God to receive and to be a blessing. Even if it feels uncomfortable; listen to God’s direction, and try it.

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

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear 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.

Hymns:

He’s Got the Whole World, p. 12

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

² Profound thanks to Gayll Phifer-Houseman, The River Church Community, January 10, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmZfn5-Nehw&feature=youtu.be>

Third Reading: Excerpts from Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” Speech, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, August 28, 1963

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

Hymns:

Amazing Grace, p. 16

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 17

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

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? (Micah 6:8)

Hymns:

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, p. 19

This Little Light of Mind, p. 20 [a reminder that even small things make a big difference!]

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

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30