

## **Justice - 6-7-20**

No justice, no peace.

No justice, no peace.

You've been hearing those words all this past week,  
as you've watched millions take to the streets in this country and  
around the world.

No justice, no peace.

On Tuesday, David and I heard those words ring out in the streets of  
downtown Fairfield,

as the young people of our community came together -- gathered, by  
the way, by a daughter of this church, our Emma Powell.

She brought them together -- masks on -- to bear witness to this  
moment in our nation's history.

No justice, no peace, they cried out,

joining in the refrain echoing through this nation.

No justice, no peace, we said with them.

A simple phrase, a rallying cry at decades of marches and protests.

But also a profound truth.

In the absence of justice, there can be no true peace.

As long as people are hurting,

as long as people are denied what others take for granted,

then we do not truly live in peace.

There may be moments of calm, but there is no presence of peace.

No justice, no peace.

But what IS justice.

We often use the word justice simply to mean punishment.

When we speak of someone being brought to justice,

we mean that that person received the punishment that their crime deserved.

And when a man is murdered,

when a man is murdered while we watch it happen on our screens,

we ask that their murderer be brought to justice. As we should.

But the justice for which our nation yearns, for which our world yearns, is a much greater justice.

It is not simply the justice that punishes,  
but the justice that heals, that restores.

It is that justice that recognizes all God's people as being children of God, equal in God's sight and in our own.

It is that justice that honors the worth of each person.

And it is that justice that recognizes the daily, systemic, *injustices* visited upon our sisters and brothers of color,  
and will not rest until each child born into this world is born into freedom, opportunity, and hope.

Then, then, will we know true peace, holy peace, God's peace.

No justice - no peace.

Almost sixty years ago,

from his cell in the Birmingham city jail in 1963,

Martin Luther King wrote a letter about justice.

He was sitting in a prison cell because he had been arrested after leading a non-violent demonstration to call attention to the suffering of those still sitting in the backs of buses, still barred from lunch counters.

And while he was in that cell, someone handed him a newspaper which contained not only the news of his arrest, but an open letter to the community written by the clergy of that area.

The clergy letter condemned Martin Luther King for stirring up trouble, condemned all those who had demonstrated with him, and appealed to the community to in future observe the principles of law and order.

So Martin Luther King wrote a letter to those clergymen.

*I have been categorized by you as an extremist,*

he wrote,

*but was not Jesus an extremist for love?*

*Bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you.*

*And was not the prophet Amos an extremist for justice?*

*Let justice roll down like waters, he said,*

*and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

*I am here, Martin Luther King wrote,*

*because injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.*

*For we are caught in an escapable network of mutuality,*

*tied in a single garment of destiny.*

To work for truest justice is to recognize the truth of what he wrote  
from that prison cell --

To build a just world begins with acknowledging that we **are** woven  
together as one,

tied in a single garment of destiny.

To create a just world means that we are not at rest  
until we recognize ourselves in the other.

We have a long way to go.

We have a long way to go to a just world yet to be,  
to creation made whole again.

But we hold the vision ever before us,  
and we **are** making our way there,  
to that time when justice rolls down like waters  
and a holy peace fills our land.

Yes, justice. Yes, peace.

Amen.