



RESOURCES FOR LENTEN WORSHIP 2024

Introduction

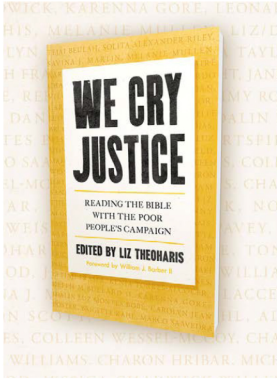


The Freedom Church of the Poor is a project of Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice. We are a spiritual home for the movement and help identify and develop moral and spiritual leadership for the struggle to end poverty, systemic racism, ecological devastation, militarism, and the false moral narrative of Christian nationalism. In addition to weekly online services that reach thousands of people, the Freedom Church of the Poor holds regular Bible study, and is developing ways to provide ongoing prayer and support to the church community. We hope you will join us at our weekly Freedom Church of the Poor worship services on Sundays at 6:00 p.m. EST on Facebook and YouTube [@kairoscenternyc](https://www.facebook.com/kairoscenternyc). To be added to the Freedom Church of the Poor email list, sign up [here](#).

The Freedom Church of the Poor has developed liturgical seasons which reflect the seasons of our lives and organizing of a movement to end poverty. Drawing on the liturgical tradition of mainline Christian churches, the Freedom Church of the Poor season of Struggle & Lament parallels the season of Lent. The description outlined below guided the worship materials in this resource and the weekly worship of Freedom Church of the Poor in this season. This year we are joined and supported by our partners at Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA), Black Christians for Palestine, Faith for Black Lives, National Council of Churches, and the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights.

Description of the Season of Struggle & Lament:

Our faith traditions and the Bible frequently lift up expressions of longing, mourning, even anger at the way things are. We lament that in the US over 700 people die every day due to poverty. That millions die every year from inadequate healthcare. That poor and people of color are disproportionately violated and degraded by the interrelated crises of pandemic, state sanctioned violence, war, storms and more. In the richest country in human history we have 140 million people who are poor or one emergency from economic ruin. And this year we lament and bare witness to the violence, death, and ongoing genocide of tens of thousands of people in Palestine - violence that is funded by the US and backed up by a twisted theology of dominance and supremacy. **These are our people, our leaders, our families and we must mourn and wail. We must cry out to God for justice and demand #CeasefireNow.** The season of "Struggle & Lament" parallels the season of Lent in many Christian traditions and, also, is a season in which the poor and dispossessed lament our struggles and call for the repentance of those who pursue policies and systems that are killing us.



We Cry Justice Projects

Leaders from Freedom Church of the Poor wrote a year-long devotional book, [We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign](#), published by Broadleaf Books in October 2022. Since the publication of the devotional book leaders have developed resources for congregations and organizations to utilize the book in study and in worship. Additionally, the Kairos Center has facilitated two cohorts of cultural artists to learn from and add to the content of the book. Many congregations have utilized the book in small groups or Sunday school classes.

This compilation of worship resources represents the collective efforts of leaders of Freedom Church of the Poor, cultural artists, and other organizers and leaders in the movement to end poverty led by the poor.

Additional **We Cry Justice** and **Kairos Center Resources**:

- Resources for Advent
- We Cry Justice Cultural Arts Project
- Freedom Church of the Poor

#CeasefireNow Resources*

*As genocide in Gaza persists this Lenten season, we want to lift up these #CeasefireNow Resources - included are prayers, song, artwork and calls to action that can be used to move your community to join in solidarity with people around the world in calling for a permanent ceasefire and liberation for Palestine. Please utilize these resources to augment the weekly worship and study resources below."

How to Use these Resources

The Lenten Worship Resources is a supplemental resource for the Struggle and Lament section of We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign. The prayers below were collectively authored, except where noted, and compiled by contributors to the We Cry Justice devotional book. This resource is intended to offer worship elements that can be integrated into your congregation's worship during the Lenten season, guided by the plight, fight, and insight of the poor and dispossessed. You are invited to consider incorporating the prayers, artwork, and songs to your worship services throughout this season. Additionally the corresponding chapters in We Cry Justice offer sermon starters for those preaching during the season.

Engage with Kairos Center

[Freedom Church of the Poor Email Sign Up](#)

[Kairos Center Enews Sign Up](#)

[Freedom Church of the Poor Weekly Online Services](#)

[Give to support the Kairos Center](#)

Thank you to all who have contributed to the content and production of these resources including Adam Barnes, Keith Bullard, Letiah Fraser, Karenna Gore, Charon Hribar, Melanie Mullen, Steve Pavey, Michael Pollack, Liz Theoharis, Katie Thiesen, Erica Williams, Jessica Williams, Clinton Wright, Katrina Zezza.

Wednesday February 14 - Ash Wednesday

Scripture Text: Amos 5:1-27

Opening Prayer: God, we hear from the prophet Amos and from the prophets in our midst today that we must wail and lament for the suffering of over 140 million poor people in the U.S. Just as they have throughout history the prophets of today call us to turn away, not from the poor, but from the systems that create and maintain poverty. As we enter this season of Lent, we remember that to repent means to turn away and so we begin our Lenten journey by turning away from the lies of scarcity and toward the God of heaven and earth who desires abundant life for all. Guide us this night toward the path of liberation. Amen.

Music: Hold On, PPC Moral Voices Choir.

Sermon starter: "You Must Let Us Wail," Chapter 12 by Stephen Pavey in *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*

Prayer of Confession: Holy One, as a nation, we have made many transgressions and you know how great our sins are. Our systems have trampled on the poor and we lament at the forsakenness in our land. We pray that your power will sustain your people in our efforts to transform these injustices and bring healing to all - for the sake of both our descendants and our revolutionary ancestors, that they may live and rest in your peace. May it be so. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Friends, hear the good news. The one who turns deep darkness into morning has heard our pleas for what is right and holy. To those who seek justice and love, hope will be given. We pray that we can become instruments to let God's justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Prayer of Lament:

How long oh Lord will people go without water and electricity while politicians escape the struggle of the people they are entrusted to serve and go on vacation?

How long oh Lord will buildings be considered sacred and people expendable?

How long oh Lord will people continue to die of Covid-19 because they do not have access to health care and the vaccine?



Image: Callie Greer from Alabama PPC mourns the loss of her daughter who died because she didn't have proper health insurance. Photo by Steve Pavey

How long oh Lord will health care be a commodity that is bought and sold to the highest bidder instead of being recognized as human right?

How long oh Lord will actions that promote white supremacy be acquitted in the halls that are supposed to uphold justice?

How long oh Lord will the killing of black bodies by police be allowed to happen with little to no consequences?

How long oh Lord will people be expected to survive on less than \$15 dollars an hour while our government officials have a lifetime salary?

How long oh Lord will 8-11 million people be homeless or on the brink of homelessness when there are more than enough vacant houses available?

How long oh Lord will half of our nation's children be poor and low-income?

How long oh Lord will the votes of black, brown, and poor folx be suppressed?

How long will 1 in every 13 black people be incarcerated and then denied the right to vote?

Sometimes we cannot even seem to form the words. Our lament is just groaning, screams, cries or a silence that speaks more clearly than any words.

But then I hear the still small voice of God say, "Who will go for us?" Who will struggle against the evils of poverty, racism, militarism, ecological devastation, and the distorted narrative of Christian Nationalism? Who will mobilize, organize, register, and educate people for a movement? You are the ones you have been waiting for?

May our response echo the words ascribed to the prophet Isaiah, "Here I am Lord, Send me."
Forward together, not one step back.

Call to Action:

The season of Lent, a season within the Freedom Church of the Poor known as Struggle and Lament, is a time of action. Traditionally it is a time of fasting and prayer, of repentance and remembrance. This Lenten season we are called to fast and repent of the ways that religion has been enmeshed with empire and to turn back to the God of liberation. In this season, we are invited to journey with the Freedom Church of the Poor and the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice to not just imagine but strive for building a world in which all have all that they need. Each Sunday of Lent (and beyond) you are invited to join with the Freedom Church of the Poor in online worship on Sunday evenings at 6pm ET. (insert link) In this season let us dedicate ourselves to the wails and the struggles of the poor and oppressed in our midst, following in the way of Jesus.

Benediction: O God of justice, let us all be dissatisfied until the United States no longer talks about life, liberty, and freedom but actually lives out justice in the public square. Amen.

Sunday February 18, 2024

Exodus 3:7 & James 5:1-6

Opening Prayer: God of liberation, your word reminds us that you have seen the oppression and suffering of your people. Make us, too, aware this day and guide us as we join with your Spirit in building your kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Music: Nuestros Cuerpos No so maquinas, The Peace Poets

Nuestros Cuerpos
 No so maquinas
 Y nuestra dignidad
 No esta a la venta, no esta a la venta
 Es Cierto
 Que somos capaz
 De construir la paz
 Con este pueblo, Con este Pueblo!

Sermon starter: "We Are Not Tractors," Chapter 15
 by Liz Theoharis in *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*

Prayer of Confession: Oh God, you ask for our hands — that you might use them for your purpose. But too often our work is used prop up an empire, not bring your reign to earth. You ask for our mouths to cry out against injustice. But we are made silent or tune out the cries of others. You ask for our eyes to see the harsh truth of poverty and the mistreatment of your people; we close them because we do not want to see or believe we can't do anything about it. You ask for our lives, that you might work through us; we only give a small part and resign ourselves to abandonment amid abundance. Lord, forgive us for believing that this way of injustice is your way, for suggesting that racism, poverty, ecological devastation, or militarism can have any part of your empire. Patient God, forgive us, renew us, and send us out as your instruments that we might take seriously the meaning of your cross and the hope of your resurrection. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: God has told us what is good. That we are to do justice and love kindness. That we are not to shed innocent blood nor deprive the poor of their rights. And that we are to share the good news of the canceling of debts, releasing those in bondage, advocating for justice. God's beloved, be assured that as long as you cry out and work for justice that you are not alone and your work will not be in vain! Be assured that you are perfect and acceptable in the sight of God.



Visual Art: Coalition of Immokalee Workers, poster by David Solnit

Call to Action: We must take seriously the words of Pope Francis: “We are called to make a serious examination of conscience, to see if we are truly capable of hearing the cry of the poor.” In this Lenten season, take time to listen to the workers and marginalized communities in your midst. Listen to the stories and solutions coming from people who have been used and abused by empire. And get involved in community efforts to fight poverty, not the poor. Advocate for raising the minimum wage, for canceling debt, and expanding health. Push for protecting voting rights and defending democracy. And get involved in poor people’s organizations in your community and especially the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.

Benediction: The night before Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was killed, he preached: “It’s alright to talk about ‘long white robes over yonder,’ in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It’s alright to talk about ‘streets flowing with milk and honey,’ but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can’t eat three square meals a day. It’s all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God’s preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do.”

We are living in the midst of a “kairos moment” – a time of great change and transformation, when the old ways of society are dying, and new ones are being born. In this moment let us hear the cries of the people, commit ourselves to be concerned with injustice in the here and now, and bring forth a new society where everyone thrives. Because this is what we have to do.

Sunday February 25 , 2024

Scripture Text: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Opening Litany:

One: As we gather for worship this day may we heed the call of God's prophets.

Many: Let us call upon God's name, humble ourselves, pray, and seek God's face.

One: May we turn away from the wicked ways of of injustice

Many: That we might be heard, forgiven, and healed.

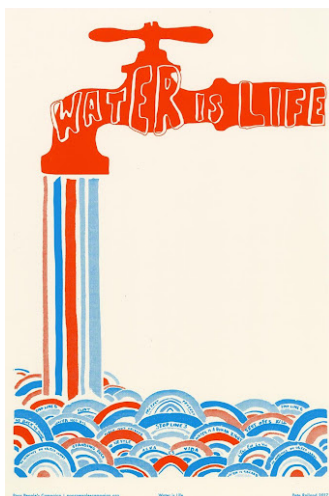
All: Amen.

Music: [The People Gonna Rise, The Peace Poets](#)

Sermon starter: "Wake Up, Jonah," Chapter 14 by Karenn Gore in We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign

Prayer of Confession: God of justice, we confess that, as a nation, we have not lived according to your way. Send your spirit O God to move among us and empower us to do what is right in your eyes, building the beloved community, ending the systematic impoverishment and exploitation of your people.

Assurance of Pardon: Friends hear the good news, God's people are called to seek what is good. When we humble ourselves, pray and seek God's face, turning from the wicked ways of the world, God listens and reaches out with many hands to heal our nation and our land.



Call to Action: Visit the [website of the Center for Earth Ethics](#) to learn more about their work, educate yourself on the issues of the climate crisis, or attend an upcoming event.

Benediction: Divine Creator, we ask that you be with us in this moment of pain and despair and help us to see it through your eyes. Give us the strength to relinquish our illusions and our hesitation. Help us to hear the cries of those who are suffering from ecological devastation and join with them to transform the ways of the world so that the whole community of life may thrive for generations to come. Amen.

Visual Art: "Water is Life" poster by Pete Railand 2017

Sunday March 3, 2024

Scripture Text: Luke 4:18-19

Music: What Do We Want, Charon Hribar, Jamel Coy Hudson, Pauline Pisano

Sermon starter: "What Will You Lift Up?," Chapter 16 by Letiah Fraser in *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*

A Poetic Prayer of Lament:

"Breathe" by Rev. Dr. Letiah D. Fraser

Inhale and exhale

The unconscious act of breathing

Brings the One that is Holy

Into our present awareness

Yawheh

The sound our breath makes as we

Inhale and exhale

This Lenten season calls us to practice

Noticing

Our breath

The Holy

All around us

In us

And in others

Inhale and exhale

Yawheh

Lent is also a time to lament

to remember

The pleas of those who were murdered

"I can't breathe."

"Mom, mom! Mommy!"

When we can no longer

Inhale or exhale

We die

Memento mori



Visual Art: "We Declare Jubilee" poster by Kim Dinh

Remember we must die
From dust we came
To dust we will return
It's the circle of life,
But, it not natural
Inhale
Ex-
not when Black life is snuffed out
Prematurely
by a racist society with anti-Black policies
Inhale and exhale
Yawheh
The Holy Is present
even if society is unconscious of it
When we unjustly snuff out Black Folk's breath
We snuff out
Yawheh
And, the Holy's last pleas become
"I can't breathe."
"Mom, mom! Mommy!
Amen is not the way to end this prayer
Instead,
inhale and exhale
Notice the Holy
in you, around you, in creation and in
All humanity.

Call to Action: Visit the Take Action page of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival's website to find information and join with the Poor People's Campaign in your state.

Benediction:

Using Our Disabled Bodies to Protest, Lament & Pray

by Rev. Dr. Letiah D. Fraser

Our disabled existence
Tells an embodied story
Of resistance
Parts are filled with beauty
Others are pretty gory

We are blind, we are crippled, we are Deaf
We are neurodivergent, autistic and nonverbal
We've had surgeries and psychological evaluations, and many other pokes and prods
Our existence is resistance
May we be proud of who we are

We are comrades in the struggle for human rights
Affordable housing, healthcare and living wages
We are the often forgotten ones of the present and on history's pages
Using our wheelchairs, walkers and crutches we continue to fight
Perhaps Lent is less about deprivation,
and more about shining a light on the plight
Of the dispossessed and poor.

Lent is not just about remembering we will die
We are well acquainted with death - 725 a day
Those with the political power, lack the will to try
To recognize and honor our shared humanity
During this Lenten Season, we lift our disabled voices against
this legalized profanity
"Enough is Enough!"
May Lent be a time to use our disabled bodies to protest, lament and pray

Amen

Sunday March 10, 2024

Scripture Text: Ezekiel 22:1-5

Opening Prayer:

One: In that day the word of the Lord came to the prophet Ezekiel with judgment for the nation who had become obsessed with idols.

Many: We pray this day for our nation which has made an idol of profit and has hoarded that which God intended for all people.

One: Let us pray not just with our words and our voices.

Many: Let us pray with our hands and feet, in the places of this nation's power and in the streets.

All: May we learn to silence our idols that God and God's people may be heard. Amen.



Music: [Pray With Your Feet](#), Paul Vasile

Sermon starter: "When Idols Speak, People Can't," Chapter 18 by Michael Pollack in *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*

Prayer of Confession: Almighty God, you are truly good. We lament that our land has been defiled by the sins of the world, shedding innocent blood, and worshiping idols who cannot give life, only take it away. Help us, O God, to see the error of our ways so that we might follow your path and cease to live in turmoil. May it be so. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Hear the good news of God's love for us! Although we as a nation have strayed from the path of what is good and right, God eternally turns toward God's people offering a new way, and longing to welcome us home. Know you are loved, and encouraged in the work of healing our nation and our world.

Call to Action: [Download Songs In The Key of Resistance: Movement Songbook](#)

Benediction: As we give our lives to a movement of justice, may you bless us and protect us, may your face turn toward us and be gracious toward us, may your face shine upon us, and may there be peace. God of history, may we have the courage and the strength to move you from your throne of justice and wrath to your throne of mercy and love. Amen

Sunday March 17, 2024

Scripture Text: 1 Kings 21:2-3

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, Let us be open to the truth. Give us courage to see and hear it all around us. Help us to meet and believe and take action together with your servants who preach it and who lead us all on to the promised land.

Music: [Rich Man's House](#), Margie Wilkes and the New Freedom Bus Tour (recorded by Jamel Coy Hudson)

Sermon starter: "Naboth's Vineyard and the Struggle for Oak Flat," Chapter 19 by Adam Barnes in *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*

Prayer of Confession: O God, we open our hearts and confess before you and one another that we have worshiped and obeyed false gods. We build walls and instruments of violence and death and then believe the lie that these bring us protection and peace. We let food rot when it could feed billions who are hungry. We build luxury homes that sit vacant while people sleep on the streets. We covet the resources in the Earth and create violence and war and destroy the land to get them, and again we lie that this is progress for all. We blame our neighbor for our suffering instead of loving them and seeking liberation together. We forget God is in us and in all life and is moving toward justice and away from all that dims and degrades life. Forgive us, O God, and guide us toward the ways of abundant life and liberation for all people and creation. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Though we are lost and misled we remember that God goes on forever, always towards love and life and justice. We know the light of God shines in us all. We remember our divinity and know that we only act and exist in God. We know You have made and promised abundant life for us all.

Call to Action: We call upon our power, drawing from the life and struggle that came before, from the prophets all around us, those who shelter and preserve the light. We step out into the streets together, toward justice and love. Now is the promise of a new day and we groan in anticipation along with all creation for the world to be re-born.

Benediction: God of creation and abundant life, of death and of rebirth, we give thanks for this good earth. Help us see the goodness in all life and reject the forces that degrade life. Teach us to embody the perseverance and power of Naboth and to join with the prophets of our day in protecting your good creation. Amen

Sunday March 24- Palm Sunday

Scripture Text: Matthew 21:1-11



Visual Art: "The Way", poster by Anni Brink

Opening Prayer:

One: With branches and coats spread out, the crowd shouted:

Many: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

One: There was yet another processional that day, one to honor and praise Caesar.

Many: A processional of the empire.

One: Still though the followers of Jesus cried out in their own processional of resistance:

All: Hosanna in the highest!

Music: Walk-in On In Love, Yara Allen Live at Kairos Center
Getting Into Step Gathering

Sermon starter: "Find a Mule, Spread a Movement," Chapter 29 by Clinton Wright in *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*

Prayer of Confession: Holy One, we confess that in our world there is a need for a poor people's campaign. We have not honored you well enough by continuing to allow policy violence and systemic oppression to plague our people. And we pray that we can be helped to take action together and to follow in your way. May it be so. Amen

Palm Sunday Litany

Liturgy written March 2023 by Kelly Smith and Jessica Williams and used during a Palm Sunday Service with local churches and community leaders in Washington Square Park in New York City.

Reader 1: "Two processions entered Jerusalem on a spring day in the year 30...One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession."

Reader 2: "These two processions embody the central conflict of the week that led to Jesus's crucifixion."

Reader 1: "Pilate's military procession was a demonstration of both Roman imperial power and Roman imperial theology."

Reader 2: Throughout the Roman empire, imperial power and theology was displayed for all to see. One example was the Arch of Titus, constructed after the Great Revolt in Judea in which the Roman military killed over 1 million Jewish people and enslaved another 100,000. These atrocities were inscribed onto the arch. The Washington Square Triumphal Arch in New York City was designed to imitate the Arch of Titus, and serve as a reminder of empire, the imperial ideology on which this country was founded.**



Reader 1: But we gather here today under this arch constructed to demonstrate military might, power, and theology to instead embody the subversive procession of the people made poor by empire, people impacted by systems of oppression as told in Matthew's gospel.

Reader 2: On this day which marks the beginning of Holy Week, we remember Jesus's counter-procession which "embodied not only a rival social order, but also a rival theology" and we lift up the lives of the 140 million poor and dispossessed people in this country today who suffer under conditions of poverty and state violence, like Jesus, his followers, and all those subjugated by the Roman empire. Today this oppression under conditions of poverty, systemic racism, militarism and the war economy, and ecological devastation continues to be undergirded by a heretical theology of power. Like those who knew change was possible and laid down palms, exclaiming Hosana, this day we too, shout "Hosana, we cry justice!"

Reader 1: This day we embody a counter-procession of the people. When you hear us proclaim "it does not have to be this way" we invite you to respond with "hosana, we cry justice!" Let's try it: "hosana, we cry justice!"

Reader 2: Today we lament that 1 million New Yorkers will be thrown off of Medicaid on May 11. It does not have to be this way!

All: Hosana, we cry justice!

Reader 1: We lament that 8.6 million New Yorkers (nearly half of us) are poor or low wealth.

It doesn't have to be this way!

All: Hosana, we cry justice!

Reader 2: We lament that 70,000 people in New York City, the center of extreme power and wealth, are homeless. More than 3,000 people live in the subways, streets and parks. It does not have to be this way!

All: Hosana, we cry justice!

Reader 1: We lament that 1.4 million NYC residents (nearly 17 percent) are food insecure and that one in three children in NYC are food insecure. It does not have to be this way!

All: Hosana, we cry justice!

Reader 2: We invite those here to cry out, to proclaim the struggles and injustices that are hurting our people. [pause and let folks shout out other struggles; have some planned]

Reader 1: Just as Jesus and his disciples organized a counter-procession as part of a movement to bring social, political, economic, and spiritual transformation, today we too are organizing to build a moral movement to end poverty and its interlocking injustices, led by the poor.

Reader 2: We too know a revolution of values is needed that centers the voices of those most impacted. We too are building a movement to lift from the bottom so everybody rises.

Reader 1: We too shout Hosana, we cry justice! Join me!

All: Hosana, we cry justice! Hosana, we cry justice!
Hosana, we cry justice! Hosana, we cry justice!

*(All quotes taken from *The Last Week* "A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus's Final Week in Jerusalem" by Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan, pages 2-3).*

* Find statistics about the conditions facing poor and low-income people in your state on the [Poor People's Campaign website](#).

** Feel free to augment the litany to include symbols of empire that exist in your city or state.

Music: [Lead with Love](#), Melanie DeMore

Assurance of Pardon: Friends, hear the good news! There's a movement going on, and there is power in what is true and right. Just as Jesus led a poor people's march on Jerusalem, we can organize to bring justice and peace to our land. Know you are empowered by the One who gives us life.

Call to Action: Jesus's processional which we observe on Palm Sunday was in direct opposition to imperial processions of Rome which celebrated power and military might. Take action this week by finding or organizing a march for justice in your community.

Benediction: God, we thank you for the strange things you ask us to do. May we continue to heed your call to take back what is ours. As the stones refused by the rulers of our society, we ask you to guide us to lay our bodies on the line. Make us cornerstones of your justice. Amen.

Thursday March 28, 2024 - Maundy Thursday

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-26

Music: [Our Liberation](#), The Peace Poets

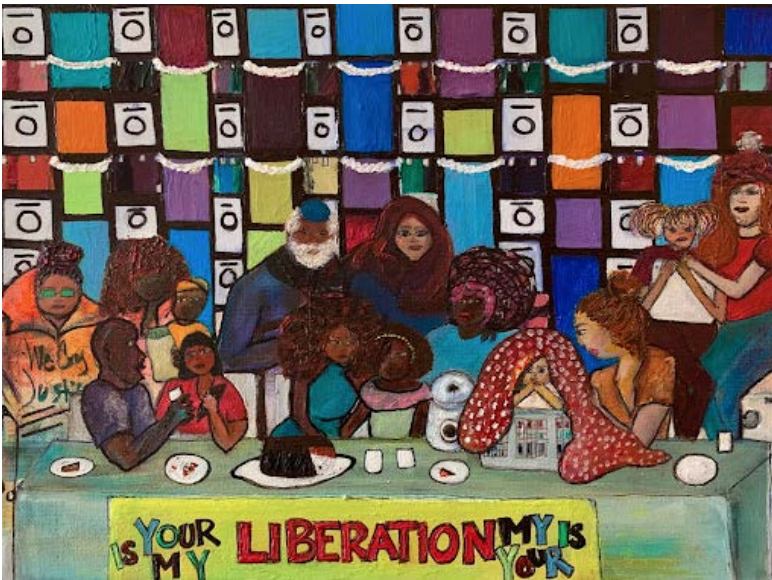
Sermon starter: "How Can Bread Divide or Dignify," Chapter 17 by Melanie Mullen in We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign

Prayer of Confession: O Giver of Abundant Life, we call to you now because we have allowed thieves to come and steal, kill, and destroy human dignity and human life. We have permitted poverty and pandemics. We have permitted racism and sexism. We have permitted homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia. We have failed to love ourselves. We have failed to love our neighbors. We have failed to fully love you. Yet, your love towards us remains.

Thank You for loving us, Holy One. Renew our hearts and our minds so that we might return to the power of love that you created in us. Help us to use that power to call out and change systems that create poverty. To care for the sick. To prevent deadly outbreaks. Help us to use that power to treat children and adults fairly and equally. Help us to judge human beings by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin. Not by who they love. Not by their gender identity. Not by their country of origin. Help us, O God, to truly and unconditionally love you, ourselves, and our neighbors, and to express that love by acts of justice and acts of mercy.
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: The God who created us out of love reminds us that we are loved and are of infinite value. The God who created us for freedom reminds us that our freedom is inalienable and God-given. God loves us, God loves you. We were made for freedom. Amen.

Benediction: Creator, in your infinite mercy and grace give us the strength and courage to be doers and not just hearers of your word. Let us be swift to stand against the empire and the injustices we see. Let us not continue in our complacency of playing it safe while the breath that you gave to your people is being deflated each day by the systems of poverty, racism, militarism, ecological devastation, our nation's distorted moral narrative and christian nationalism. Embolden us to unite to take action together to stand against the death-dealing forces of empire that all may receive abundant life this day. Amen.



Visual Art: "Your Liberation is My Liberation", painting by Ciara Taylor



Visual Art: Poster by Aaron Hughes

Friday March 29, 2024 - Good Friday

Scripture Text: Matthew 28:5-10

Opening Prayer: [We Are Here Interfaith Litany](#)

Music: [I Am Not Afraid](#), The Peace Poets

Sermon starter: "Pray for the Dead, Fight For the Living," Chapter 13 by Erica N. Williams in We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign

Prayer of Confession: Holy One, under empire, many have been crucified. We are brought to our knees in agony and lament for the beloved innocence fractured by this sinful and broken world. God of justice, we long to separate ourselves from this unholiness and turn our faces back to you, to meet you at the empty tomb. May it be so. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Friends hear the good news: The love that we thought had been desecrated is alive and well. What empire has tried to destroy lives on in spite of crucifixion. With the goodness and power of God, all shall be made well. Know you are held in this goodness and power to go forth and continue in the mission of love.

Benediction:

"A Prayer to Set It Off" by Rev. Erica Williams

Let us go to the Spirit to ask for divine guidance as we SET IT OFF!

Creator in your infinite mercy and grace give us the strength and courage to be doers and not just hearers of your word. Let us be swift to stand against the empire and the injustices we see. Let us not continue in our complacency of playing it safe while the breath that you gave to your people is being deflated each day by the systems of poverty, racism, militarism, ecological devastation, our nation's distorted moral narrative and Christian nationalism.

Help us, Great Liberator to set our face towards injustice like Jesus set his towards Jerusalem.

Lead us as we go down like Moses to places of injustices and declare boldly, "To let our people go."

Grant us the spirit of Esther that said, "I will go unto the King and if I perish, I perish."

Let us persevere like The Persistent Widow who pressed on until she made the unjust judge grant her demands.

Make us steadfast like Stephen who continued to confess your word even in the face of death.

Strengthen our backs like Fannie Lou Hamer who declared "Sometimes it seems like to tell the truth today is to run the risk of being killed. But if I fall, I'll fall five feet four inches forward in the fight for freedom. I'm not backing off."

Solidify in us which side we will be on like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who declared,

"I choose to identify with the underprivileged. I choose to identify with the poor. I choose to give my life for the hungry. I choose to give my life for those who have been left out. This is the way I'm going. If it means suffering a little bit, I'm going that way. If it means dying for them, I'm going that way."

Ignite in us a holy fire like Harriet Tubman who encouraged those escaping enslavement, "If you hear the dogs, keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If there's shouting after you, keep going. Don't ever stop. Keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going."

Mold in us the mindset like Mother Jones who professed, "Pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living."

Organize us so that we can declare like Ella Josephine Baker, "we who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes."

Help us Holy One, to keep our eyes on the prize until we see justice roll down like a mighty stream.

Amen, Ase', Blessed Be



"Pray for the Dead, Fight Like Hell for the Living", poster by Rev Leonina Arismendi

Sunday March 31, 2024 - Easter Sunday

Scripture Text: Luke 24:1-6

Opening Prayer:

One: Christ is risen!

Many: Christ is risen indeed!

One: Why then do we continue to look for the living among the dead? The living Christ is not found in the systems or theologies of empire. The living Christ is found in the leadership of the poor who are ending poverty.

Many: Let us join in sharing this good news!

One: Christ the Lord is risen today!

All: Hallelujah!

Music: Up Over My Head, Recorded by Jamel Coy Hudson, Pauline Pisano and Charon Hribar

Sermon starter: "Resurrecting Hope," Chapter 22 by Keith M. Bullard II in *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*

Call to Action: Text "KAIROS" to 833-577-1315 to be engaged with the Kairos Center as we commit to building a movement to end poverty, led by the poor!

Prayer of Confession: All powerful and ever-loving God, we confess that we have doubted your goodness and your power, and we have doubted your love for us. In our despair, we have looked for the living among the dead, but you never left us. Help us remember that you always have been and always will be in our midst, along side us in the struggle for justice and for life. May it be so. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Friends hear the good news! God is with us. God stands with the crucified classes, the poor and the oppressed. And there is power in God's presence. Know you are held in love, and emboldened to pursue goodness, by the One who lives in spite of the brutality of empire.

Benediction: Loving God, encompass all movements for peace and justice in your embrace and enable us all to dedicate ourselves to preaching, teaching, and spreading the good news: the news of hope. Amen.



Visual Art: "We Want to Live", poster by Anni Brink



Struggle and Lament Lenten Study Series



Image: Callie Greer from Alabama PPC mourns the loss of her daughter who died because she didn't have proper health insurance.

Photo by Steve Pavey, Hope in Focus.

Introduction

We Cry Justice! We cry out loud! Through the plight, fight, and insight of the poor and dispossessed we come to see the injustice and the pain of the world and to discover a path forward. Biblically, Lent was modeled on Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness to face the enormity of what his ministry to bring good news to the poor and to free the oppressed would look like. We can use this time to grieve, bear witness to the suffering, and bring us all to repentance, not in a way that we turn back but that we turn toward God.

May this time of crying out loud make us reckon with the pain perpetrated by forces of empire and allow our cries to be a piercing shout that cuts through all of the noise of injustice and indifference. Let this season be a time of preparation where we allow our righteous rage and our collective cries to lead us to a new way of being. Crying out against injustice is non negotiable.

Cry loud! Cry loud!

How to Use this Study

The study is a supplemental study guide for the Struggle and Lament section of [We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible With the Poor People's Campaign](#). It is intended to guide individuals and congregations through the book. It is suggested that you read each chapter of the book alongside the chapters of this guide.

Getting Started:

- Set aside at least 20 minutes to go through each section of this guide.
- Make sure to introduce each person in the group to each other. (Consider using an icebreaker or opening prompt to encourage participation.)
- Begin and end each session with song and prayer. (Music and video suggestions are included in the study guide chapters.)

- Read the texts and study questions in this guide together.
- Allow space and time for participants to share reflections, insights and ask questions.
- Integrate art and culture. (View images and art, listen to music, sing the songs, and allow the arts and culture pieces to enrich and inform the discussion and reflection.)
- Take action. Don't let the group end without talking about commitments to taking action together.

Session One:

You Must Let Us Wail

(Chapter 12, Steve Pavey)

Theme:

We are a Movement of Wail-ers. Lent is a season often filled with weeping and repentance. Will we wail *together* this season for our country's sins of systemic racism, poverty, an economy based on war, ecological devastation, and white Christian nationalism? Will we take our wailing to the streets?

Textual Study: Amos 5:11-12, 16

Therefore, because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins - you who afflict the righteous, who take the bribe, and push aside the needy at the gate...Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord: In all the squares there shall be wailing; and in all the streets they shall say 'Alas! Alas!' They shall call the farmers to mourning, and those skilled in lamentation to wailing.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the transgressions Amos names? What does trampling on the poor look like today?
2. Why does God call for wailing not inside, but in the “squares” and “streets?”

Watch and See:



Photo by Steve Pavey



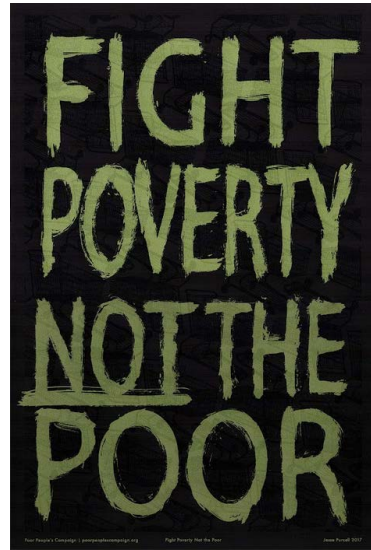
[A Time to Wail | Callie Greer - Poor People's Campaign](#) (6 minutes)

Taking Action:

One of the important organizations in Alabama is Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM). GBM does community care through sharing resources while fighting nonviolently for justice. Can we wail with Callie and the Alabama Poor People’s Campaign by [following Greater Birmingham Ministries on Social Media?](#)

Let's make simple signs together*: "We're Wailing: Fight Poverty, *Not* the Poor!" Let's put them up in homes and community spaces. How might our simple signs become spiritual reminders, communal commitments, conversation starters and organizing tools?

**Print Fight Poverty Not the Poor posters and post them in your community. Click on image to the right for a printable file.*



Poster by Jesse Purcell

Session Two: **Pray For the Dead, Fight For the Living**

(Chapter 13, Erica N. Williams)

Theme:

Too often those who are denied dignity in death are denied dignity in life. But God insists that we must honor those who have come before, especially prophets and fallen fighters as we continue the struggle in the present. As we reach 1 million dead from Covid, with large numbers of those poor and low-income, may we remember them as we demand justice for all.

“The disciples, and all those who take up the message of the good news, will have the power of the Christ consciousness to fight against the wickedness of the empire.” -Erica Williams

Textual Study: Matthew 28: 5-10

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Where do you see the wickedness of empire?
2. What are some ways you can fight for the living while honoring those who have died in the fight for freedom?

Watch, Look, and Sing:



Video about the Non-violent Medicaid Army

https://youtu.be/qp5Mv_bSyCk



* Close your session singing "I Am Not Afraid," reflecting on the commitments you are making to join the movement and fight for justice.



"I Am Not Afraid" <https://youtu.be/XET4h7fyroc> (Closing Song*)

Written by The Peace Poets, Recorded at The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival Theomusicology

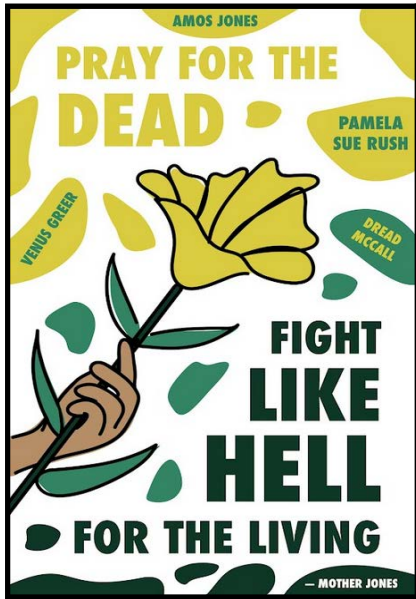


It's Kairos Time!

Healthcare Is A Human Right featuring: Put People



00:00 | 34:34



Poster by Rev. Leonina Arismendi



Print this poster and have participants add names of freedom fighters they want to lift up - people who have come before us and taught us how to fight. Click on image for printable file.

Call to Action:

Check out and follow grassroots organizations fighting for the right to health care and public health including Put People First-Pennsylvania (<https://www.putpeoplefirstpa.org>) and the Nonviolent Medicaid Army (<https://nonviolentmedicaidarmy.org>) and others in your community.

Session Three: Wake Up, Jonah

(Chapter 14, Karenni Gore)

Theme:

God has a purpose for you. The writer uses the book of Jonah to show God's grace and redemptive power through our flaws and imperfections. This book chapter and season challenges us with shifting our perception. It asks: what if the darkness that you're surrounded by is like what Jonah experienced while being in the belly of hell? What if this was a place of transition for new life?

Textual Reflection: 2 Chronicles 7: 14

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Discussion Questions:

1. With the darkness created by a global pandemic of covid-19, how have you seen a shift in perception concerning healthcare, housing, workers rights and wages?
2. What is the message that we are being called to deliver unto the world that would bring forth change?

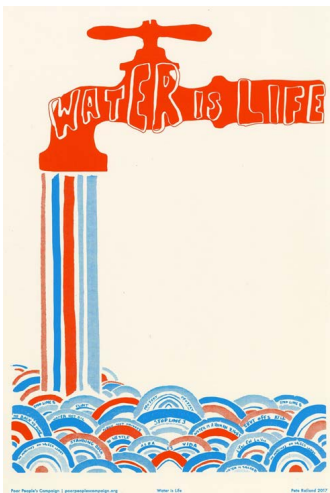
Watch, Hear and Sing:



Peace Poets: The People Gonna Rise... (Opening Song)

<https://art.350.org/how-tos/peace-poets-the-people-gonna-rise-like-the-water/>

*The people gonna rise like the water
We're gonna face this crisis now
I hear the voice of my great-granddaughter
Saying keep it in the ground*



Water is Life, poster by Pete Railand 2017

Session Four: We Are Not Tractors

(Chapter 15, Liz Theoharis)

Theme:

Hearing the Silent Cry. God hears the poor and dispossessed cry out from the depths of suffering. God helps us stand up in refusing to let that suffering have the last word. Theologian Dorothea Soelle describes this as the interrelated acts of, "kneeling down and standing up." The cry of the persecuted is made silent by many things in our world, which causes us to separate from each other and turn away from God.

Textual Reflection: Exodus 3:7

I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry.

James 5:1-6

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the cry of the oppressed bring us back into right relationship with God? What leads us away from hearing it?
2. Where have you heard the silent cry? Not just the cry of pain and suffering, but an illumination of truth and love.

Watch and Look:



Coalition of Immokalee Workers, poster by David Solnit



Pain and Power 2022

youtube.com/watch?v=zj5aVF54p-0



It's Kairos Time!

Those Who Would Be Free Must Strike The First B



00:00 | 31:48

Take Action:

Study the struggles of our times that help us hear the silent cry including [Chaplains on the Harbor](#), [Union de Vecinos](#), [Border Network for Human Rights](#), Oak Flat, Apache Stronghold

Session Five: **What Will You Lift Up?**

(Chapter 16, Letiah Fraser)

Theme:

We cry out and mourn for black and brown lives executed with the endorsement of a racist system. We cry out and lament for immigrants exploited and expelled from stolen lands. We sob for women victims of a patriarchal society murdered at the hands of those who one day swore to love and protect them. We cry justice, we cry justice! Like Jesus, let us lift each one of them up in our heart in our prayers and with our actions.

Textual Reflection: Luke 4: 18-19

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are the captives, the oppressed and the blind of today's society?
2. What good news do we have for them?

Watch, Look, and Hear:



Watch video testimony of Jorge Garcia and his family who were separated at the border

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCR-Gbf8qjQ>



We Declare Jubilee, poster by Kim Dinh



It's Kairos Time!

We Are The Poor: Building Global Solidarity. featu



00:00 | 30:58

[Charon Hribar, Jamel Coy Hudson, Pauline Pisano \(NYS PPC\) "What Do We Want" \(Closing Song*\)](#)

**Sing "What Do We Want" reflecting on what "cries of the poor" we must lift up and demand justice.*

Take Action:

Read the PPC Open letter to the nation on the killing of George Floyd and the end of Systemic Racism

<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/national-day-of-fasting-and-focus/demands/>

Support an immigrant family and learn more at: <https://www.sanctuaryhood.org/>

Session Six: How Can Bread Divide or Dignify

(Chapter 17, Melanie Mullen)

Theme:

Humanity is divided by the concentration of wealth, by status, race, age, location, nation. But communities in right relationship, whether in a single church or in the world community, affirm everyone's equal dignity, practicing mutual giving and mutual learning. What the world needs is not merely those who have much giving to those who have not. What we need is a mindset that recognizes, learns from, mourns with and fights for those who already give so much without recognition. The way to heal divisions is to give and receive freely with honor for all.

Textual Reflection: 1 Corinthians 11:17-26

(would fit with a communion service but not necessary)

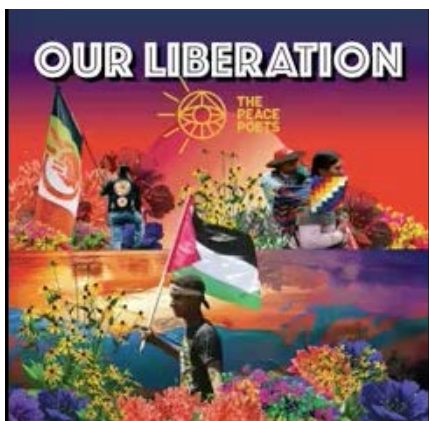
17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Discussion Questions:

1. What divisions do you see and how do you see them being overcome?
2. What have you learned from others in the struggle? What have you been given? What gifts do you still need to receive?

Watch, Look and Sing:



Peace Poets, "Our Liberation" (Closing Song*)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g73tfrxe0Q7I3iUXGL2gwKDLGkvfYz7S/view?usp=sharing>

**Sing this song as you close your session and reflect on what collective liberation means and how we work to bring about collective liberation.*

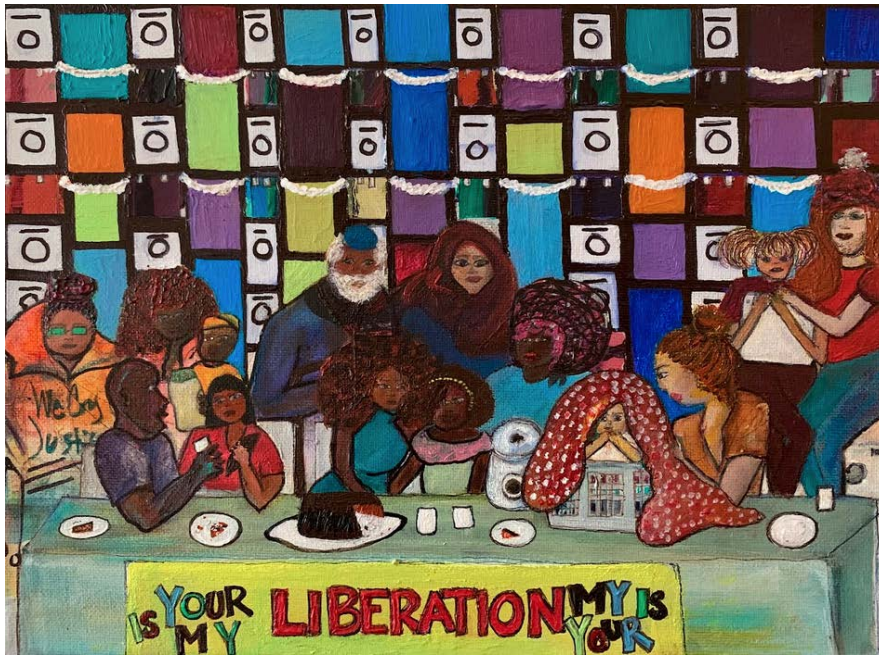


Poster by Aaron Hughes



Mama Cookie at Fed Up Friday

<https://www.facebook.com/FedUpintheSouth/videos/191923486149673>



Your Liberation is My Liberation, painting by Ciara Taylor

Take Action:

Support [Fed Up](#), which seeks not only to meet immediate needs, but to raise up leaders to build power and organize for equal dignity. Look for ways to build kindred initiatives where you live.

Session Seven: When Idols Speak, People Can't

(Chapter 18, Michael Pollack)

Theme:

Righteous Anger. Sometimes we must cry out in righteous anger. We need not always move too quickly to healing or resolving things without allowing for this powerful form of crying out. Anger that comes out of an experience of deep pain and injustice is not about expecting something to change immediately as a result of that crying out, but about being honest with ourselves about the pain and bringing it into the world so others, especially those who perpetuate it can know it.

Textual Reflection: Ezekiel 22:1-5

1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her detestable practices 3 and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: You city that brings on herself doom by shedding blood in her midst and defiles herself by making idols, 4 you have become guilty because of the blood you have shed and have become defiled by the idols you have made. You have brought your days to a close, and the end of your years has come. Therefore I will make you an object of scorn to the nations and a laughingstock to all the countries. 5 Those who are near and those who are far away will mock you, you infamous city, full of turmoil.

Discussion Questions:

1. Share an experience of expressing righteous anger? How did others respond to it?
2. How is the push toward the June 18th PPC assembly in DC an expression of righteous anger?

Watch, Listen and Sing:



[Paul Vasile, "Pray With Your Feet" \(Closing Song*\)](#)



It's Kairos Time!

[Storming Caesars Palace. featuring: National Wel](#)



00:00 | 43:46

Take Action:

Learn more about the Anti-corruption Campaign, March on Harrisburg

<https://www.mohpa.org/>

Session Eight:

Naboth's Vineyard and the Struggle

(Chapter 19, Adam Barnes)

Theme:

Taking a Stand for Justice. The Bible tells story after story about those in power willing to use whatever force needed to maintain their power. The wealthy are used to getting what they want. But in this story and others those whose homes, lands, burial grounds, and sacred sites are

being destroyed are up against the wall and all they can do is push. Push. We must push and not accept injustice.

Textual Reflection: 1 Kings 21:2-3

2 And Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house; I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." 3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance."

Discussion Questions:

1. Where do you see the Ahabs of our day stealing land, resources and dignity from the people?
2. Who do you know who won't allow violence, fear, poverty, racism to get in the way of justice?

Watch, Listen and Sing:



The Fight for Oak Flat:

<https://vimeo.com/410488903>



 **Jamel Coy Hudson singing “Rich Man’s House “ (closing song)**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1811BCLa4PhblCeSxxTq205y8d98EzXCS/view?usp=sharing>
 *Sing “Rich Man’s House” and call out the interlocking systems of injustice that prevent us from living out our full humanity.

Take Action:

Join a struggle to push back against gentrification, pipelines, land transfers that strip resources from the poor and line the pockets of the rich. <https://buildbackfossilfree.org/#about>

Check out the entire *We Cry Justice* Cultural Arts Project at:
kairoscenter.org/resources_cpt/we-cry-justice-cultural-arts-project/



Thank you to the CONTRIBUTORS of this Study Series
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