

Advent 3

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28



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*God of our present age, stir up in us a longing for justice
with compassion and prepare us for the
in-breaking reign of your love and peace.*

Amen.

A series of Advent devotions prepared by the leaders of
Anglican and Lutheran churches in full communion

by Susan Johnson

In the Gospel reading we hear John the Baptist say, “I am the voice crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.”

The passage from Isaiah captures what that voice in the wilderness is crying for:

to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

These words from Isaiah are what Jesus reads aloud in the synagogue in Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry, going on to announce, “*Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*”

These readings underscore for me our need to offer prophetic voices crying in the wilderness — in the town squares, in the halls of government, in the courts of law — on behalf of all those who are marginalized and oppressed and in need of justice.

Is it just me, or do you also feel like the list of those in need of justice keeps getting longer and longer?

Our present age includes wars in Gaza, Ukraine, Syria, South Sudan, Nigeria, Central African Republic and elsewhere; the greatest number of refugees and internally displaced persons in the history of our planet; racial tensions made vivid by the death of Michael Brown and the subsequent and sometimes violent demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri; the growing number of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada; hunger and poverty around our world and in our own countries; homelessness; domestic violence; human trafficking; more.

The list is long.

Yet we are called to be like John the Baptist, crying out and working for justice, following the example of Jesus. We do this as churches, individually and cooperatively.

This past September, the leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Episcopal Church issued a joint pastoral letter on climate change. This was an important national and international effort. But we are called to cry out and work for justice individually and in our local context as well.

We work for justice through our heartfelt prayers and our offerings to support the work of the wider church. We work for justice as we petition our elected leaders, letting them know of our concerns. We work for justice as we volunteer in local ministries whether through our churches or through such community agencies as food banks, out-of-the-cold programs, homeless shelters and more. We work for justice when we take to the streets in silent vigil or loud, non-violent protest.

How is this true for you? How are you crying out for and working for justice? What more could you, your congregation, your community, your church be doing?