

On Becoming

A Collection of Meditations Curated by Art House Dallas



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Foreword

“For humans to have a responsible relationship to the world, they must imagine their places in it.”

—Wendell Berry

Our places shape our loves and longings as well as our knowing and doing. Put simply, who we become is intimately related to how we imagine where we are. As the craftsmanship of God’s artistry, human beings are made for imaginative responsibility in community and creation. Though much is broken in the world and ourselves, the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives the transformed vision necessary to see the tangible facets of life woven into the fabric of becoming.

This collection of art is an invitation to the idea and reality of becoming, not individual self-actualization but a rich growth into the fullness of Christ. In Him, the particularities of life in creation become the raw materials for cultivation in community—this song, this painting, this meal, this prayer, this poem. The flesh and blood Word, who “moved into the neighborhood”, has called us to live with creative responsibility and become who we were always meant to be, God’s beloved children.

The anthology you hold before you is the loving creation of a community of friends in hope of transformation. Each chapter includes a text, poem, visual art, and scripture, along with questions for prayerful reflection to draw you further up and further in the journey of becoming. We hope you will find the authors, poets, and visual artists to be wise guides and friends as you enter into a companioned journey of becoming in Christ through the door of imagination and deeper to the heart. May this collection attune our senses to the sacred character of how we live and create in the particular place we find ourselves now. In all our searching for truth, justice, and beauty: to become fully, we must first be found in creation by the pursuing love of God, who asks, “Where are you?”

—Art House Dallas

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Beauty & Justice

“I believe that if we take these three areas—justice, beauty, and evangelism—in terms of the anticipation of God’s eventual setting to rights of the whole world, we will find that they dovetail together and in fact that they are all part of the same larger whole, which is the message of hope and new life that comes with the good news of Jesus’s resurrection.”

—N. T. Wright
Surprised by Hope

Why Care About Justice?

by Nicholas Wolterstorff

Do the doing of justice and the struggle to undo injustice belong to Christian piety? Are they components of Christian spirituality? I am not asking here whether the Christian shares in some general human obligation to act justly and to work for the alleviation of injustice. I mean to ask whether the failure to act justly and the failure to support the struggle to undo injustice are marks of defective Christian piety. I mean to ask whether doing justice and struggling to undo injustice are motivated and required by the wellsprings of Christian life and action.

To almost all of us who ally ourselves with the Christian church, this is a most unfamiliar question. If we were reared in the Orthodox or Catholic traditions, we will have been taught to think that the specially pious person is the one who participates in the liturgy with regularity and fidelity. If we were reared in the Anglo-American evangelical tradition, we will have been taught to think that the specially pious person is the one who reads her Bible faithfully, engages much in personal prayer, and openly and freely speaks of Jesus Christ and what he means to her. If we were reared in the Reformed tradition, we will have been taught to think that the specially pious person is the one who regularly attends church and faithfully seeks to serve the Lord in his daily work and life. If we were reared in certain branches of the Anabaptist tradition, we will have been taught to think that the specially pious person is the one who in charity ministers to the poor of the world. None of us will have been taught to think that piety calls for justice. Perhaps something else does, but not spirituality.

Now I firmly believe that authentic Christian piety includes participation in the liturgy, includes drinking from the wells of Scripture, includes personal prayer, includes giving the testimony of a witness, includes endeavoring to transmute one's daily work into obedient service, includes extending the hand of charity. But does it also include doing justice and struggling to undo injustice? To answer this question it would be relevant to consider the witness of the Christian tradition. In this article, however, I shall limit myself to reflecting on the witness of Scripture.

Over and over the Old Testament confronts us with the declaration that God loves justice. To read Isaiah 61 is to hear God saying, "I the Lord love justice" (v. 8). To join Israel and the church in taking on one's own lips

the words of Psalm 37 is to find oneself saying that “the Lord loves justice” (v. 28). And these are but two examples from a multitude.

Furthermore, God’s love for justice is declared to be an active love: God does justice. “The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed” we sing when we bless the Lord with the words of Psalm 103 (v. 6). And when we cry for deliverance with the words of Psalm 140 we say,

I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted,
and executes justice for the needy.

(v. 12)

But why does God love justice? Into what larger pattern does God’s love of justice fit? An ancient, enduring, and prominent strand of Christian theology sees God’s love of justice as grounded in God’s anger with those who disobey God’s commands. God’s love and practice of justice are God’s love and practice of *retributive* justice. But I think it starkly clear that the passages which speak of God’s love of justice are not pointing to God’s delight over the writhings of those who are justly punished; God has no such delight. God’s love for justice is grounded in God’s love for the victims of injustice. And God’s love for the victims of injustice belongs to God’s love for the little ones of the world: for the weak, defenseless ones, the ones at the bottom, the excluded ones, the miscasts, the outcasts, the outsiders. It is true, indeed, that God is angry and disgusted over what happens in human affairs; but in good measure God’s anger and disgust are with those who violate and frustrate God’s love for the little ones of the world by victimizing rather than protecting them. God is the one

who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free;
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the sojourners,
he upholds the widow and the fatherless;
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

(Psalm 146)

God's love for justice, I suggest, is grounded in God's special concern for the hundredth one.

The Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted,
and executes justice for the needy.
(Psalm 140:12)

Why is that? What is the connection between love for justice and love for the little ones of the world? What is the connection between hatred of injustice and disgust with those who violate one's love for the weak ones? Well, justice is present in society when people receive or enjoy the goods that are due them. Or to put it from the other side, focusing more on distributive than on retributive justice: Justice is present in society when people enjoy those goods to which they have a rightful claim: protection against assault, freedom to worship as they see fit, sufficient food to live and work, etc. Now the strong and powerful ones in a society will generally be able to secure such goods on their own. Hence to find out whether a society is just, one must look not at the powerful but at the weak: Do the practices, laws, and institutions of the society secure to them the enjoyment of the relevant goods? The test is not whether the economically powerful have enough to eat — they almost always do; but whether the economically *powerless* have enough. Justice is society's charter of protection of its little ones. That is why the biblical writers, when speaking about justice and injustice, always point to the aliens and the widows and the orphans. The Lord God, says Moses in his farewell speech to his people, "executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing" (Deut. 10:18).

A long tradition of Christian reflection grounds the claims of justice in respect for the image of God which is present in every human being. I heartily agree that such respect requires doing justice. But that line of thought is at best implicit in the biblical writers. For the most part they see God's love of justice as part and parcel of God's special concern for the weak ones.

Father of the fatherless and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
God gives the desolate a home to dwell in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity.
(Psalm 68:5-6)

Who is like the Lord our God,
who is seated on high,

who looks far down
 upon the heavens and the earth?
 He raises the poor from the dust,
 and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
 to make them sit with princes,
 with the princes of his people.
 He gives the barren woman a home,
 making her the joyous mother of children.

(Psalm 113:5-9)

Recent discussions in various North American periodicals make it abundantly clear that we who are well-to-do members of the core of our present world-system do not like this message. We are offended by this declaration of God's special concern for the hundredth one. We are disgusted by this picture of God as searching the highways and byways of our world for the ones who are still outside. Does God not love the rich ones, the believing ones, the athletic ones, the ones with 20/20 vision, as much as God loves the poor, the unbelieving, the lame, the blind? Does God not love the ninety and nine as much as the hundredth? Or if we do not seem to be getting anywhere with that line, we try the opposite tack: Are we not all poor, all unbelieving, all lame, all blind? Are not all one hundred of us outsiders, hence all equally the subjects of God's love?

Of course it is true that God loves every human being. God loved the whole wide world so much and in such a way as to deliver up his own Son to suffering and to disgusting execution. And of course it is true that God delights in the righteous. But whoever affirms the teaching of the Scriptures will have to interpret God's universal love and God's delight in righteousness in such a way as to be compatible with God's special love for the outsider.

How can that be done? Perhaps along the following lines. God's love includes God's universal beneficence: God's desire for the flourishing of each of God's human creatures. But God's love also includes God's suffering over the suffering and waywardness of God's children. God is pained by the sight of those who suffer malnutrition and starvation. God is pained by the suffering of those whose neck is under the oppressor's boot. God is pained by the suffering of aliens and orphans and widows deprived of protection by law. God is pained by the suffering of the psalmist surrounded by backbiting critics. When these suffering people address their lament to God, they strike in God a responsive chord. God's love for the victims of our world is God's suffering love. It is in that love that God's love of justice is grounded. The tears of God are the soil in which God's love of justice is rooted.

What the secularist sees merely as good things coming his way, the believer sees as gifts from God. What the secularist sees merely as a stupendously intricate world, the believer sees as a glorious work of God. What the secularist sees merely as wrongdoing, the believer sees as sin. So too, what the secularist sees merely as justice, the believer sees as giving God joy. And what the secularist sees merely as injustice, the believer sees as making God suffer. For the believer, justice and injustice are sacramental realities. God loves the ninety and nine along with the one; but God suffers over the plight of that one.

Yet it is also true that God's suffering love for the one is the other side of God's longing for the flourishing of all one hundred. It is the other side of God's longing for the shalom of all God's human creatures. An ever-beckoning temptation for the Anglo-American evangelical is to assume that all God really cares about for God's human creatures here on earth is that they are born again and thus destined for salvation — to assume that the only kind of lostness God cares about is religious lostness. On this view, God leaves the ninety and nine and goes out in search of that one who is not a believer; but God does not go out in search of the one who is poor, does not go looking for the one who is oppressed. But if we understand the shalom for which God longs in this narrow, pinched way, then all those biblical passages about God's love for justice must remain closed books to us.

What God desires for God's human creatures is that comprehensive mode of flourishing that is shalom. Shalom includes religious reconciliation; but it includes vastly more as well. Insofar as someone is suffering injustice, just insofar one of the goods to which that person has title, a good essential to her flourishing, is not being enjoyed by her. God's love of justice is grounded in God's longing for the shalom of God's creatures and in God's sorrow over its absence. The contours of shalom can be discerned from the contours of the laments to which God gives ear.

I have spoken thus far of God's love of justice and of the grounding of that love in God's suffering love for the little ones of the earth who are deprived of shalom. But of course the biblical writers do not only picture God as lover and practitioner of justice. They also present God as commanding us to do justice and as pronouncing judgment on those who do not. "Justice, and only justice, you shall follow," says Moses in that farewell speech to which I have already referred, "that you may live, and inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Deut. 16:20). The command is intensified in the prophets. In a passage from Amos which by now has entered deep into the consciousness of humanity (5:21-24) God says,

I hate, I despise your feasts,
 and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings,
 I will not accept them,
 and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts
 I will not look upon.
 Take away from me the noise of your songs;
 to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
 But let justice roll down like waters,
 and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The same command to do justice occurs in an equally well-known passage from Micah. The passage opens with intense poignancy as God expresses pained lament to Israel — not now humanity lamenting to God but God lamenting to humanity:

O my people, what have I done to you?
 In what have I wearied you?
 Answer me.
 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
 and redeemed you from the house of bondage.

The prophet then imagines someone, stung by this divine lament, asking what would please God and ease God's sorrow:

With what shall I come before the Lord,
 and bow myself before God on high?
 Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
 with calves a year old?
 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
 with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

We all know the prophet's answer:

He has showed you, O man, what is good;
 and what does the Lord require of you
 but to do justice, and to love kindness,
 and to walk humbly with your God?
 (Micah 6:1-8)

Given our discussion of God's love of justice and the place of that love in God's character, it is now no mystery why God commands us to practice justice and to struggle against injustice. Only if we purge our societies of injustice will God's suffering love for the victims of the world be relieved. The believer's doing of justice is grounded in her desire to answer the lament of God and relieve the divine suffering. It is grounded in her own suffering love of God.

But perhaps we should see more behind the command than this. The command to do and struggle for justice is also the command to imitate God, to image God. As God is just, so are we to be just. We are to be icons of God, imaging God's justice in our justice. Again the farewell speech of Moses makes the point: God "executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:18-19). "You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge; but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this" (Deut. 24:17-18). As God has heard our laments and satisfied our longings, so we are to hear the laments of the poor among us, the weak and oppressed.

Perhaps this theme of the doing of justice as grounded in the imitation of God — of the doing of justice as *constituting our imaging* rather than just *manifesting our respect* for the image — opens up yet another dimension of our topic. Several times over in his farewell address Moses says to his people that they are a people holy to the Lord their God, for God has chosen them to be a people for his own possession (7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19). It is in this context that all the regulations of Deuteronomy are set: the regulations concerning clean and unclean animals, the regulations concerning the cleanness and uncleanness of persons, the regulations concerning the dismissal of those soldiers from battle who have large unfinished projects back home, the proscriptions against idolatry and various forms of immorality, the regulations insuring that the sacrificial animals will be unblemished, the regulations whereby the community is to purge itself — and the regulations concerning justice. Holiness was not only set-apartness; holiness was also unity, purity, completeness, perfection. And the idea behind the Mosaic legislation seems to have been that Israel's being holy to God is as much task as status. Israel is to *become* holy and to *institute* in its life memorial remembrances of God's holiness. Its life is to become unified, pure, complete, and perfect like unto God's; and it is to incorporate quasi-liturgical memorials of God's holiness. In its life it is to imitate and celebrate the holiness of God. And for that, it must do justice.

The implications relevant to our concerns here are clear: there is something of the unholy about injustice. Injustice is a form of desecration. The call to justice is grounded in the call to be holy even as God is holy. Justice is sacral. It is no wonder, then, that Deuteronomy and the prophets move so fluidly back and forth between condemnations of idolatry, of immorality, and of injustice. All are desecrations.

Thus says the Lord:

“For three transgressions of Israel,
 and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
 because they sell the righteous for silver,
 and the needy for a pair of shoes —
 they that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,
 and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
 a man and his father go in to the same maiden,
 so that my holy name is profaned;
 they lay themselves down beside every altar,
 upon garments taken in pledge;
 and in the house of God they drink
 the wine of those who have been fined.

(Amos 2:6-8)

In summary of what we have seen thus far: The believer's doing of justice and struggling for the undoing of injustice is motivated by his desire to imitate God and obey God's command. In turn, God's command to do justice is grounded in God's suffering love for the little ones of the world and in God's longing to have a people which reflects and celebrates his own holiness. Hence the believer's doing of justice and struggling for the undoing of injustice is also motivated by his sharing in God's suffering love for the little ones of the world and by the desire to be holy even as God is holy.

All that I have said so far has been based exclusively on the Old Testament. I have delineated the place of justice in Old Testament piety. I have avoided mingling New with Old Testament evidence; and I have done so in order to be able to address myself to that large group in the evangelical community who insist that the propriety of such piety has passed away. New Testament piety, they say, in contrast to Old, does not include to any significant degree the doing of justice and the struggle for the undoing of injustice here in this present age. It's true that God's heart goes out to the weak ones of the world; it's true that God longs for shalom; it's true that God longs for a community to reflect and celebrate God's holiness. But God does

not command you and me to fulfill these divine longings by struggling for justice. Justice and injustice pertain to social structures and practices. The New Testament does not tell us to go out and try to reform society. It tells us, to the contrary, that the struggle for such reform is always futile. It tells us that this present evil world is hopeless, that it must and will pass away. We are to fasten our hearts in hope and prayer on the coming of the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem there will be justice, there will be shalom, there will be holiness. But for that city we do not work. We wait. God and God alone will bring it about. The fundamental posture of the Christian in the world is hopeful, patient, suffering waiting, coupled with witnessing to the worth of such waiting.

The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:19-25)

There can be no doubt that expectant waiting is indeed a fundamental component of New Testament spirituality. But that scarcely settles the issue before us. The issue is rather of the *form* that our waiting is to take. Are we to resign ourselves to the injustice of the world while patiently waiting for the coming of God's Reign to sweep it all away; or are we to struggle for its alleviation while patiently waiting for the coming of God's Reign to bring our efforts to fruition? Are we to tolerate our human injustice while waiting for God's justice, or are we to await God's justice as the fruition of our struggle against human injustice? Are we to await the fulfillment of our social endeavors as well as of our social hopes; or are we to await only the fulfillment of our social hopes?

The issues here are so deep that I cannot possibly discuss them in adequate detail. Let me confine myself to what usually proves to be the central issue: Did Jesus teach that the holy, just, and peaceful Reign of God which the prophets foretold and for which Israel was commanded to work is to remain unseen until the coming of the New Jerusalem, or did he teach

that already in his work that holy, just, and peaceful Reign was breaking in? No Christian denies that God will bring about that prophetic vision of the just and holy shalom. But do we await its implementation while enduring its absence, or do we await its completion while discerning its coming?

After John the Baptist was arrested, says Mark in his Gospel, “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.” Matthew records the same events: Jesus, after hearing that John had been arrested, “began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” But Matthew adds an important detail to his narration. After hearing of John’s arrest, and before beginning to preach, Jesus withdrew to Capernaum in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, so as to fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy that:

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
toward the sea, across the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles —
the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned.

(Matt. 4:15-16)

Luke’s report of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry adds yet other details. In the course of his tour through Galilee, Jesus maintained his practice of going to synagogue on the sabbath. One sabbath, upon being handed the book of Isaiah in the synagogue, he read the opening of chapter 61:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

(Luke 4:18-19)

He then sat down; and with the gaze of all the worshipers fixed on him, he said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

One more specimen of Jesus' self-interpretation of his ministry is important. John, while sitting in prison, began to hear news of the doings of Jesus, the one whom he himself had baptized. These reports led him to turn over in his mind the question whether Jesus was or was not the expected one. So he sent some of his followers to ask Jesus himself the question, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Jesus' answer came in two stages. First, "in that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight." Then, with a clear allusion to Isaiah, he said to John's followers,

Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at me. (Luke 7:19-23; see also Matt. 11:2-6)

In short, Jesus interpreted his ministry in terms of the messianic expectations of Isaiah; the long-expected Reign of God was, in his person and work, decisively breaking in. Those expectations were expectations for the coming of full-orbed shalom, for the arrival of holiness upon earth. Jesus' ministry was not the ministry of telling us patiently to await the sight of God's shalom; it was the ministry of displaying that shalom by healing those blemishes incompatible with shalom: blindness, lameness, leprosy, hopelessness, onerous religious obligations, social exclusion.

Of course we all know painfully well that the coming of God's Reign was not completed by Jesus and is not yet completed. Jesus did not produce that Reign in its fullness. We have to interpret his work in the light of that fact. The category that John regularly uses in his Gospel is that of *sign*; Jesus performed signs. Traditionally these signs have been interpreted as proofs or evidence: Jesus produced miracles as evidence of his divine authority. But surely if we take seriously those passages to which I have pointed, in which the shalom envisaged in the Old Testament is said to be breaking into our existence in the work of Jesus, then we have to interpret the signs as more than this. What Jesus produced were not in the first place proofs of his divinity but *signs of the Kingdom*. And these signs are *samples*. A sample indicates qualities of the whole cloth from which it is cut. The works of Jesus were cut from the cloth of the Kingdom to which they pointed. In them, shalom was signified by being manifested.

Those who say that we must wait rather than work for justice regularly observe that Jesus did not struggle to change social structures nor explicitly command us to do so. But surely that fact can now be seen to be

of no significance. With little imagination we can all think of other aspects of shalom that Jesus did not effect. What matters is that Jesus embraced that entire vision of shalom. He did not exclude from it the references to justice. On the contrary, he said that he had come to proclaim release for the captives and to set at liberty those who are oppressed. What I find painful is that so often those very people who do not work but only wait for justice, on the ground that Jesus neither changed social structures nor explicitly told us to do so, happily send their sons into the armies of the world to defend their own nations. One must ask where Jesus did or commanded any such thing.

What remains to consider is how you and I are to participate in this coming of the Kingdom that Jesus both announced and signified by manifesting. The answer can be approached from many different angles. One of the most important, it seems to me, is from the angle of the New Testament declaration that the church is the body of Christ on earth. Jesus is no longer physically present among us. Yet we are not to think of him as simply absent from earth. The church on earth is to be seen as his body; and in that body his Spirit is present. The conclusion seems unavoidable, that we are to carry on, with such means as are given to us, Jesus' work of *proclaiming* the coming of the Kingdom and producing samples of its shalom. We are to live with the outcasts, we are to console the brokenhearted, we are to heal the lepers, we are to lift the burdens of legalistic religion, we are to release the captives, we are to liberate the oppressed. And we are to do all these as signs — as *sampling signs* — in lives that are lives of discipleship. Obeying and imitating God now acquires the new quality of following Jesus. While enjoying such bits of health and justice as there are in our world, and struggling for their increase, we are to say to ourselves and to all humanity: Remember, there is more.

I have said that God's longing for justice and God's practice of justice are grounded in God's love for the little ones of the world; and I have suggested that Christian piety will incorporate the struggle to imitate God and follow Jesus in these respects. Let me close, then, by referring to the picture sketched out in Psalm 72 of the good ruler who imitates God in his justice:

Give the king thy justice, O God,
 and thy righteousness to the royal son!
 May he judge thy people with righteousness
 and thy poor with justice!

Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
 and the hills, in righteousness!

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor!

May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon,
throughout all generations!...

May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!

For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.

He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.

How painfully different are the present rulers of our world — including those of our own country — from this ruler, whose goodness resides in his justice and whose justice is grounded in suffering love for the weak, the needy, and the oppressed.



If Perhaps by Chance, I Find Myself Encaged... by Sedrick Huckaby
Oil on canvas, oil on wood, wire, and CelluClay
38 1/2" x 37" x 11"
2016

Justice

by Langston Hughes

That Justice is a blind goddess
Is a thing to which we black are wise:
Her bandage hides two festering sores
That once perhaps were eyes

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Luke 4:16–22

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

An Invitation to Respond: Prayer of Examen

- *Become aware of God's presence.* In the company of the Holy Spirit take note of where you recognize injustice in your life and world. Ask God to help you slow down and notice.
- *Have gratitude.* As you consider injustice in your life and the world, be mindful of those whom God has used to fight for justice. Give thanks to God for these people and organizations.
- *Pay attention to your emotions.* Reflect on the feelings you experience and record your thoughts.
- Identify a friend to visit with about a particular moving injustice you have noticed and commit to praying together for resolution to this injustice. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.



Art House Dallas is a 501(c)(3) non-profit which works to cultivate creativity for the common good in order to inspire everyone to live more imaginative, meaningful lives. We accomplish our mission by fostering community amongst individuals, believing that their rich artistic expression will serve to bring a greater sense of belonging to our city. Our programming reaches individuals across many genres of the arts including music, writing, visual art, spiritual formation, and more.

Learn more at www.arthousedallas.com

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