

Seeking a Way to The Beloved Community

Racial Justice Meditations, Scripture, and Prayers

I. Acknowledging Racism in the Human Condition

(Rob) It lurks in the shadows, hidden from our vision; It lurks in the shadows, often disguised with patronizing deeds; It lurks in the shadows, maintaining our separation.

Unacknowledged in the past, we now invite you forth to our consciousness. The absence of examination, the absence of awareness has kept the healing light of love at bay.

Intellectually we understand you and abhor the inhumanity of your manifestation; historically we are grateful for a gradual awakening to the need to break down barriers you create.

(Jessica) Psalm 130: 1-8

We cry to you, O Lord, from the depths of the earth.

Out of the depths I call to you, LORD; Lord, hear my cry! May your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

If you, LORD, keep account of sins, Lord, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness and so you are revered.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits and I hope for his word.

My soul looks for the Lord more than sentinels for daybreak. More than sentinels for daybreak, let Israel hope in the LORD,

For with the LORD is mercy, with him is plenteous redemption, And he will redeem Israel from all its sins.

(Doug) Reading:

Acknowledging the presence of prejudice in the human condition and in ourselves is an essential step toward wholeness. In The Luminous Darkness, Howard Thurman tells us there is real spiritual growth in admitting that one's life is not blameless even as one is dedicated effectively to working for the blameless life. (52)

(Everyone) Response:

"I confess my own inner confusion as I look out upon the world.... I confess my own share in the ills of the times." (Howard Thurman, Meditations of the Heart, 195)

(Mary) 1 Corinthians 11:22

²² What! Do you not have households to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

(Judy) Prayer - *LET ME NOT LOOK AWAY, OH GOD* by the Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Choctaw

"Let me not look away, O God, from any truth I should see. Even if it is difficult, let me face the reality in which I live. I do not want to live inside a cosseted dream, imagining I am the one who is always right, or believing only what I want to hear. Help me to see the world through other eyes, to listen to voices distant and different, to educate myself to the feelings of those with whom I think I have nothing in common. Break the shell of my indifference. Draw me out of my prejudices and show me your wide variety. Let me not look away."

(Heidi) 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

II. The Separation of the Human Family through Racism

(**Sandy**) We call forth images of times past. Remembrances of our personal encounters with prejudice. We take this time to remember these encounters and all others...

(Silence)

(**Carol**) Reading:

In The Luminous Darkness, Howard Thurman reminds us that the core of religious experience is that” ...human life is one and all (individuals) are members one of another.” (The Luminous Darkness, x) This deep awareness of unity will bring us out of the shadows into the light.

(The Luminous Darkness, x)

(**Larry**) Response:

We are troubled...by the divisions that are within us, the deep conflicts in our own spirits which cause us to be at war within, which cause us to be a house divided against itself. This sense of inner conflict and division is a part of the larger conflict and division that exist among Your children everywhere....May we all be one family in Your presence living in Your world. (Howard Thurman, *The Centering Moment*, 80)

(**Kasey**) Prayer - *From the Manual of the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross*

Almighty God, source of true justice and peace,
in you there is no distinction of persons,
for in you we are equally loved.

Reconcile us that we may live and work with each other and with you to establish your Kingdom on earth where there is no poverty, war, or any oppression, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

III. Petitions (Rob)

In hope that the arc of history bends toward justice, we lift up our prayers for racial healing, saying: Bind us together, O God of love.

For the Church, that its prophetic voice may proclaim to all the challenge to break the hopeless cycles of poverty, ignorance, prejudice, and despair which degrade the sacred dignity of humankind, we pray.

For our country, that we might celebrate our racial diversity and the distinctive and rich contributions of every fiber of our cultural fabric, we pray.

For wise and decisive action on the part of local and national leaders, that the scandal of racism may be eradicated from our society, we pray.

For an end to the subtle racism of economic oppression which permeates our society's structures and resides in many hearts, we pray.

For our faith communities, that they may not succumb to indifference or accept the status quo, but press on for fundamental change, we pray.

For the victims of racial discrimination, that they may be filled with hope for a more just future, healing from wounds received, courage to advocate for change and for peace, and the grace to overcome hatred with love, we pray.

For those who work for racial justice, that they may be sustained in hope, empowered with courage, and filled with the grace to persevere in love, we pray.

(Catholic Charities [A Prayer Service for Racial Healing in Our Land](#))

IV. Seeking Unity

(Mary) Reading:

In The Search for Common Ground, Howard Thurman discusses his deep faith in humankind's innate desire to come together in community, to be one human family: At (our) moments of greatest despair (we are) instinctively unwilling and perhaps unable to accept the contradictions of (our lives) as final or ultimate. Something deep within reminds (us) that the intent of the Creator of life and the living substance is that (we) must live in harmony within (ourselves) and with one another and perhaps with all of life. (27-28)

(Heidi) Response:

Kindle Your light within me, that all my darkness may be clearly defined...Kindle Your light within me, O God, that Your glow may be spread over all my life...More and more, may Your light give radiance to my flickering candle, fresh vigor to my struggling intent, and renewal to a flagging spirit. (Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*, 160)

(Judy) Isaiah 58: 9-12

⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
¹¹ The Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.
¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

(Kasey) *The Maori Lord's Prayer*

Eternal Spirit, earth-maker, pain-bearer, life giver, source of all that is and that shall be,
father and mother of us all,
loving holy one in whom is heaven:

may it happen in the way it is good to you; may it happen on earth in the same way as it happens in spirit world.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil free us.

For you live in the glory of power that is love, now and forever, now and forever.
Amen

(Jessica) Response:

Forgive us, our Creator, for all the failures by which we have responded to Your love and Your truth. Keep our spirits tender and our minds and hearts sensitive to You, that we may not spend our years wandering in the darkness. (Howard Thurman, *The Centering Moment*, 124)

(Carol) John 15:9-17

9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants^d any longer, because the servant^e does not know what the master is doing; but I have

called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Concluding Prayers:

(Doug)

Meditations of the Heart by Howard Thurman

The concern I lay bare before God today is my need for courage: I need courage to be honest:

honest in my use of words;
honest in accepting responsibility;
honest in dealing with myself;
honest in dealing with (others);
honest in my relations with God.

I need courage to face the problems of my own life
the problems of personal values:
they are confused; they are often unreal;
they are too exacting for comfort.

I need courage to face the problems of my work.
Sometimes it seems I am working at cross-purposes with my own desires and ambitions...
Sometimes I am arrogant instead of simply taking pride in doing my work well.
Sometimes I'm doing what I'm doing just to prove a point that is not worth proving after all.

Here in the quietness I lay before God my need for courage, for the strength to be honest, for the guidance to deal effectively with the problems of my own life.

(For The Inward Journey - The Writings of Howard Thurman)

(**Larry**) *For When People Ask* by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

I want a word that means
okay and not okay,
more than that: a word that means
devastated and stunned with joy.
I want the word that says
I feel it all all at once.
The heart is not like a songbird
singing only one note at a time,
more like a Tuvan throat singer
able to sing both a drone
and simultaneously
two or three harmonics high above it—
a sound, the Tuvans say,
that gives the impression
of wind swirling among rocks.
The heart understands swirl,
how the churning of opposite feelings
weaves through us like an insistent breeze
leads us wordlessly deeper into ourselves,
blesses us with paradox
so we might walk more openly
into this world so rife with devastation,
this world so ripe with joy.

(**Sandy**) **God of the Journey** by Fr. Manuel Williams – U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Lord God of the Journey,
From Ur to the land of Canaan,
From way down in Egypt's land to the River Jordan,
From the Sinai to Jericho's walls,
From the Door of No Return to the New World,
You have journeyed with your people.
You have ordered and guided all our steps.
You have strengthened us when weary and refreshed
us when dry.
You have kept us from stumbling and carried us
when faint.
Gracious God as we remember the March from
Selma to Montgomery,
Keep our feet on the path of justice, peace
and equality.
May we never tire of this arduous journey, for

ultimately it is the way of Jesus.
Jesus who is our brother, our Savior, our companion
and our destination.
With grateful and expectant hearts we pray. AMEN.

(**Jayne**) *For Being Human* Cole Arthur Riley

God of Shalom

Here we are dangling one another from the precipice without care or concern for our collective fate. We have lost sight of our own faces, risking our humanity in favor of supremacy. Guide us away from the edge of our undoing. Show us what it means to be people of deep and abiding reverence for the beauty and connectedness of everything everywhere. Train us out of habits of degradation and artifice---incessantly competing to be worth more, to be loved more. Remind us that we don't need to exalt humanity over any other piece of creation in order to be worth something. Keep us from the delusion of our dominion over earth, sky, or star. We are no greater. Remind us that the dust beneath us transcends our own humble existence, and let our hardened exteriors soften in the presence of safety. May any honor we've withheld from one another be doubled in the presence of reparation and forgiveness. We won't get free alone. Keep us human. *Amen*

(Black Liturgies 10)

Let's have a bit of silence at the completion of these readings....

FOR REFLECTION:

What do we see as the breach in our community?

What are the actions we need to take? What are the conversations that we need to have?

How will we be responsible for this good and challenging work?