

## **Just Love Devotions for Conference on Ministry**

Pre-Recorded Music: "All of Your Ways Are Peace"

### **Reader A**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

### **Reader B**

Let us pray.

O God of steadfast love, you are near to those who call, to all who cry out to you for help. Hear our cries and help us to hear the cries of others. Set us all free and grant to us your grace and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Silence

### **Reader A**

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow,  
of well-aged wines strained clear.

<sup>7</sup>And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
<sup>8</sup>he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away  
from all the earth,  
for the Lord has spoken.

<sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him,  
so that he might save us.  
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

## Reader B

On October 1<sup>st</sup> churches around the world celebrated World Communion Sunday and the ways God sets tables of plenty for all people: tables and banquets of healing, of community, of liberation and justice. Sadly, we don't always partake...

## Reader A

"There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup>But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup>Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

<sup>37</sup>Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>38</sup>But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup>So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup>Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" <sup>41</sup>They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?

<sup>43</sup>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup>The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

Silence

## **Reader B**

Forgive us for the ways we attempt to hoard your blessings for ourselves and control who gets to feast on your plentiful fruit. Forgive us when we turn to violence to maintain power and control.

Silence

## **Reader A**

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>10</sup>Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup>“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Silence

## **Reader B**

You call us to give all ourselves to communion and unity with you. Forgive us when we get busy and distracted by the cares of this world and exclude ourselves from your eternal banquet. Forgive us when we put up walls and hold parts of ourselves back from your healing.

Silence

## **Reader A**

<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. <sup>16</sup>So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. <sup>17</sup>Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" <sup>18</sup>But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup>Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup>Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" <sup>21</sup>They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

Silence

## **Reader B**

Forgive us when we hide behind the ways of empire and commerce rather than committing all of ourselves to your eternal feast.

Pre-Recorded Music: "O God, Will You Restore Us?"

**Reader A**

We invite you to silently join in this adaptation of the Lord's Prayer, from the writings of Ronald Rolheiser.

OUR FATHER . . . who always stands with the weak, the powerless, the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the aged, the very young, and those who, by victim of circumstance, bear the heat of the day.

**Reader B**

WHO ART IN HEAVEN . . . where everything will be reversed, where the first will be last and the last will be first, but where all will be well, and every manner of being will be well.

**Reader A**

HALLOWED BE THY NAME . . . may we always acknowledge your holiness, respecting that your ways are not our ways, your standards are not our standards. May the reverence we give your name pull us out of the selfishness that prevents us from seeing the pain of our neighbor.

**Reader B**

YOUR KINGDOM COME . . . help us to create a world where, beyond our own needs and hurts, we will do justice, love tenderly, and walk humbly with you and with each other.

**Reader A**

YOUR WILL BE DONE . . . open our freedom to let you in, so that the complete mutuality that characterizes your life might flow through our veins, and thus the life that we help generate may radiate your equal love for all and your special love for the poor.

**Reader B**

ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN . . . may the work of our hands, the temples and structures we build in this world, reflect the temple and the structure of your glory, so that the joy, graciousness, tenderness, and justice of heaven will show forth within all of our structures on earth.

**Reader A**

GIVE . . . life and love to us, and help us to see always everything as gift. Help us to know that nothing comes to us by right and that we must give because we have been given to. Help us realize that we must give to the poor, not because they need it, but because our own health depends upon our giving to them.

**Reader B**

US . . . the truly plural us. Give not just to our own but to everyone, including those who are very different than the narrow us. Give your gifts to all of us equally.

**Reader A**

THIS DAY . . . not tomorrow. Do not let us push things off into some indefinite future so that we can continue to live justified lives in the face of injustice because we can make good excuses for our inactivity.

**Reader B**

OUR DAILY BREAD . . . so that each person in the world may have enough food, enough clean water, enough clean air, adequate health care, and sufficient access to education so as to have the sustenance for a healthy life. Teach us to give from our sustenance and not just from our surplus.

**Reader A**

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES . . . forgive us our blindness toward our neighbor, our self-preoccupation, our racism, our sexism, and our incurable propensity to worry only about ourselves and our own. Forgive us our capacity to watch the evening news and do nothing about it.

**Reader B**

AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US . . . help us to forgive those who victimize us. Help us to mellow our spirit, to not grow bitter with age, to forgive the imperfect parents and systems that wounded, cursed, and ignored us.

**Reader A**

SAVE US FROM THE TIME OF TRIAL . . . do not judge us only by whether we have fed the hungry, given clothing to the naked, visited the sick, or tried to mend the systems that victimized the poor. Spare us this trial, for none of us can stand before your gospel scrutiny. Give us, instead, more days to mend our ways, our selfishness, and our systems.

**Reader B**

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL . . . that is, from the blindness that lets us continue to participate in anonymous systems within which we need not see who gets less as we get more.

**Reader A**

FOR THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY ARE YOURS . . . and not ours, no matter how much we try to claim them for ourselves, even though you freely offer them to us.

**Reader B**

NOW AND FOREVER . . . though the work of justice cannot wait any longer. AMEN.

Pre-Recorded Music: “Break Us”

**Reader A**

O loving God, you know the needs of all the world. By your Spirit, grant that we, having turned to you in prayer, now might turn to one another in peace, tend and keep what you have made, and love our neighbor with the love of Jesus, in whose name we pray.

**Amen.**

**Reader B**

God all mighty, God most merciful bless us, keep us, and give us peace. Amen.

“All of Your Ways Are Peace”

from the album “Justice Songs” by The Porter’s Gate

“O God, Will You Restore Us?” and “Break Us”

from the album “Lamentations: Simple Songs of Lament and Hope” by BiFrost Arts