

Closing Devotional

Call to Worship from Psalm 85:8–9

- ⁸ Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
 for he will speak peace to his people,
 to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.
- ⁹ **Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,**
 that his glory may dwell in our land.

Reading from Kairos USA, referencing Kairos Palestine

Bullet points to be individually handed out to participants to be read one at a time in different voices

The time has come for truth telling—about the reality of the situation in Palestine and about the sobering facts of the U.S role in this continuing violation of fundamental principles of justice and international law. We can do no better than to present the Palestinian reality as recorded in the Kairos Palestine document:

- “The separation wall erected on Palestinian territory ... has turned our towns and villages into prisons ... making them dispersed and divided cantons. Gaza ... continues to live in inhuman conditions, under permanent blockade and cut off from the other Palestinian territories.” (1.1.1)
- “Israeli settlements ravage our land ... controlling our natural resources, including water and agricultural land.” (1.1.2)
- “Reality is the daily humiliation to which we are subjected at the military checkpoints, as we make our way to jobs, schools or hospitals.” (1.1.3)
- “Religious liberty is severely restricted; the freedom of access to the holy places is denied under the pretext of security. Jerusalem and its holy places are out of bounds for many Christians and Muslims from the West Bank and the Gaza strip.” (1.1.5)
- “Refugees are also part of our reality. ... They have been waiting for their right of return,
 generation after generation. What will be their fate?” (1.1.6)
- “Jerusalem continues to be emptied of its Palestinian citizens, Christians and Muslims. ... Their homes are demolished or expropriated. Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace.” (1.1.8)
- “In the face of this reality, Israel justifies its actions as self-defense, including occupation, collective punishment and all other forms of reprisals against the Palestinians. In our opinion, this vision is a reversal of reality. Yes, there is Palestinian resistance to the occupation. However, if there were no occupation, there would be no resistance, no fear and no

insecurity. This is our understanding of the situation. Therefore, we call on the Israelis to end the occupation. Then they will see a new world in which there is no fear, no threat but rather security, justice and peace.” (1.4)

Responsive Scripture Reading

Psalm 57

- ¹ Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
**in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.**
- ² I cry to God Most High,
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
- ³ **He will send from heaven and save me,
he will put to shame those who trample on me.
God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness.**
- ⁴ I lie down among lions
that greedily devour human prey;
**their teeth are spears and arrows,
their tongues sharp swords.**
- ⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.
- ⁶ **They set a net for my steps;
my soul was bowed down.**
They dug a pit in my path,
but they have fallen into it themselves.
- ⁷ **My heart is steadfast, O God,
my heart is steadfast.**
I will sing and make melody.
- ⁸ Awake, my soul!
**Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.**
- ⁹ I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;
I will sing praises to you among the nations.
- ¹⁰ **For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the clouds.**
- ¹¹ **Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.**

Confession (read in silence)

As the body of Christ in the United States, we confess that by not speaking truth to power we have failed to follow the call of Jesus to serve God with love and compassion for all people. We have failed to challenge our government's policies. Rather than acting as an honest broker in negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, our government has consistently supported,

both financially and diplomatically, the actions of Israel that have brought suffering to Palestinians, continuing insecurity to Israelis and the declining prospect of a just peace.

As individuals and as church institutions, we have supported a system of control, inequality and oppression through misreading of our Holy Scriptures, flawed theology and distortions of history. We have allowed to go unchallenged theological and political ideas that have made us complicit in the oppression of the Palestinian people. Instead of speaking and acting boldly, we have chosen to offer careful statements designed to avoid controversy and leave cherished relationships undisturbed.

We have accepted a notion of justice that is defined by the powerful and is equated with “security” and “law and order.” Declaring ourselves committed to nonviolence, we have condemned the resistance of the oppressed while legitimizing the use of overwhelming force by the powerful. We have called for reconciliation in the form of dialogue and mutual understanding while overseeing the continuation and advancement of the oppressive conditions that breed continued conflict and violence.

One: Hear our prayers of confession;

All: Have mercy on us, O Lord.

Silence

Assurance of Pardon Psalm 145:13b–19a

The Lord is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.

14 The Lord upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.

16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.

17 The Lord is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.

18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.

Response to the Assurance Musical selection

Silence

Reading from Kairos USA

Churches in the United States are awakening to the desperate situation of the Palestinians— Christians and Muslims—living under occupation, and to the enormity of loss and dispossession suffered by Palestinians as the result of the establishment of the State of Israel. We are also aware of the irrefutable mandates of international law and human rights that call to us to action, as well as the biblically and theologically-based principles that summon us to witness and to act.

In renewed faithfulness to the Gospel, we invite our church leaders and our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ to join us in discipleship in this Kairos moment. We appeal to our government to be faithful to the principles of universal, God-endowed human rights, human dignity and justice articulated in its foundational documents. We call to mind Dr. King's charge to our society in his historic speech on the Vietnam War at Riverside Church in 1967. "These are the times," Dr. King told us, "for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every [person] of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest." Today, the churches of the Holy Land are calling us to stand with them in their nonviolent struggle. How can we do otherwise?

Benediction And now go out into the world to learn, proclaim, and enact peace with justice in God's world for all people. And as you go, may the grace of God, the love of Christ, and friendship of the Holy Spirit be and abide in you today and everyday.

Written by the Reverend Kate Taber. Used with permission.