

Dear Friend

I cannot think of a time when the world has been more united than it is today. We are united in facing a pandemic that has affected almost every single person on the planet, and the majority of right-thinking people, which fortunately is the majority of people, are united in condemning the murder of George Floyd at the hands of people whose job it is to "protect and serve". Sadly the unity that the Covid 19 virus should be bringing to the world is an illusion. Every country is doing its best to combat the threat of the virus, but there is still not enough cooperation across the globe, and in some quarters - you know who I'm referring to - there is even a reluctance to call a G20 summit to address how the richer nations, who were the first to suffer, can help the poorer nations. It looks like the decisions our own government is taking in easing the lockdown, may be driven more by a desire to restart the economy and not lose out in competing with our European neighbours, than by saving lives. Competition between nations needs to be replaced by cooperation, but there is little sign of this. There is a real possibility that as things improve the world will return to "business as usual", which will always put profit before people. It is not easy to dethrone mammon from its central place in the minds and hearts of decision-makers. We have a unique opportunity to do things differently, by putting the needs of the poorest and the needs of the planet at the top of the agenda. I am concerned that the economic imperative will drown out these needs, and the clean air and the quietness that have been among the few benefits of this crisis, will become memories, confined to the history books as the days of Covid.

The death of George Floyd should affect us all. The calm brutality of the police in ignoring the cries of a dying man has rightly shocked. I hope the voices raised in protest will not be drowned out by the need to stop the violence, which does nothing to further the cause of justice. As Ben Okri said on the Today programme this morning there needs to be transformation. True transformation is only possible by the working of God the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to change hearts, attitudes, minds and actions, such that the will of God, which is that we should love, care for and protect one another, is done on earth as in heaven. George Floyd is at peace and at rest, as he has left this world and gone to glory; but his death leaves the world in turmoil. We need to pray that violence would be rooted out, and the hate that is the soil in which violence grows would be turned to love.

We have just celebrated the gift of God to us of his Holy Spirit - his life, his breath. Reading the final words of George Floyd, with his repeated cry "I can't breathe" is a stark reminder that we need both the air and the Spirit to have real life - the life of God literally inspiring us. As we receive this gift afresh with each breath we take, may we be inspired to make a difference in this world, the difference that we make when we turn every breath into a prayer.

Verses for today: O consider my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law. Plead my cause and redeem me; according to your promise, give me life.

*Psalm 119.153-154.*

With much love and prayer

Simon