

A prayer for the nation and the church: Lord, plead our cause for justice

January 6, 2021 -- Day of the Epiphany

*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?
Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.*

*O Lord, I have heard of your renown,
and I stand in awe, O Lord, of your work.
In our own time revive it;
in our own time make it known;
in wrath may you remember mercy. (Habakkuk 1:2-4; 3:2-3)*

Holy and righteous God, our nation is simmering with violence, boiling over with anger and exploding in destructive words and deeds. Lord, hear our cry. Lord, plead our cause for justice. Help us as a nation and as a church to reckon with the truth — past sins that feed present-tense iniquities and that fuel future transgressions. Forgive our politics, forgive our complicity.

Give us Jesus-sized wills and Holy Spirit-power to pray for our enemies — foreign and domestic — and to love neighbor and stranger because we know, God of our salvation, left on our own we cannot do it. Gird us with strong knees to kneel in fervent prayer, courageous hands and feet to challenge Pharaohs and Caesars who seek to subvert your love and the ways of your kingdom, and humble hearts confident in your providence that creates a beloved community from the stone and rubble of fallen empires, nations and systems.

Restrain evil and violence in a way that only you can. Intervene, Lord. Intrude into the world so that your justice will run like water and your righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Grant us wisdom to discern your way, Spirit. Grant us courage to speak your Word of truth, God. Grant us your guiding light and shepherding presence for the facing of this sacred hour. Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

by Neal D. Presa, past moderator of the 220th General Assembly, board chair of the Presbyterian Foundation