

A Lenten meditation

An updated contemporary adaptation of Isaiah 58:1-12

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Cry out, don't hold back.
Lift up your voice like a trumpet.
Announce to my people their rebellion,
To the nation their sins.

Yet, day after day, the rulers and countless people invoke my name,
as if they practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God.
They delight to invoke my name to bless their violent deeds.
They use my name to bless their systems of power, structures,
institutions, wars, and weapons.
We practice good religion, they say.
We pray and serve our country well.
We keep good law and order.

Look, you serve your own interests, not mine says Yahweh.
You follow your religion of white supremacy, nationalism, materialism and nuclearism.
You are slaves to selfishness.
You know not my ways.
You don't know how to fast - your rituals are empty.
You assert an authority you say is rooted in morality - based on justice and truth.
You hypocrites!
Your morality is rooted in worshiping idols - gods of metal, money, greed,
and self-serving power.
You are desecrating the earth and destroying countless lives!
You worship false gods, not me!

Is not this the fast that I choose - the real act of worship that I desire:
To undo the thongs of the yoke, to renounce empire and all systems of political and
economic domination and oppression,
To resist all violence, racism, sexism, discrimination, torture and killing,
To let the oppressed and captives go free,
To disarm and abolish nuclear weapons, killer drones, and all weapons,
To end all injustice,

To reverence all life and to safeguard Your holy creation!

Is it not to share your resources with the poor, to offer hospitality to the homeless, to welcome the refugees and immigrants, to clothe the naked, and to provide quality housing, health care, food, education, and work for everyone?

Is it not to make sure that the dignity of each person is respected and to recognize that all human beings are sisters and brothers, children of God?

Is it not to eradicate poverty, inequality, racial hatred, and injustice and abolish war so that people can live in justice and peace?

Then and only then shall your light break forth like the dawn
and your healing shall spring up quickly.

Then you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help,
and the Lord will say,

Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger,
the speaking of evil,
the demonization and scapegoating of your adversaries,
the profiling and targeting of African Americans and other people of color,
if you offer food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
if you establish justice for the oppressed and proclaim liberty to the captives,
then your light shall rise in the darkness and your despair be transformed into hope.

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.

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.