

# A Day of Prayer

# A Day of Fasting

# A Day of Lament

*Is this not the kind of fasting I have chosen: To loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away your own flesh and blood?*

*- Isaiah 58:6-7*

Today we break away from our normal so we can connect with a normal that others experience. Fasting connects us with the results of brokenness and injustices in the world. The pit we will begin to feel in our stomachs is a reminder. Sit with it. Dwell on it. Understand that while we are choosing to experience this, many others around the nation are forced to feel this. While we can stop at any time, others cannot.

While Jesus was feasting with tax collectors and sinners, he was asked why his disciples did not fast, he replied: **“Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”** (Luke 5:34-35).

Jesus brought with him a taste of the kingdom of God; a taste that should leave us craving for more. When we see and feel manifestations of the kingdom of God in moments of healing and restoration and unity, we feast in them. But right now, our nation is showing us a moment outside the kingdom of God. We see the pain and brokenness and hatred of sin and evil in the world. Systems of oppression and injustice are being revealed before our very eyes. In this moment our bridegroom is taken away from us and we lament. And we fast. And we pray.

We lament for our fellow human beings who have been made in the image of God. We lament that the value of their lives has been reduced. We lament that sons and daughters of God are being murdered and oppressed, pushed down and silenced. We lift our heads towards the heavens and in unity with our brothers and sisters we wail to God.

We fast out of our lament. Blessings can make us blind to the trials that others are going through. We fast to remind ourselves the results of brokenness. We fast to connect with those who have been dealt more brokenness than ourselves. We fast so that our hearts will break. We fast so that we are forced to respond, so that we are forced to act.

We pray that God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We pray that God hears the cries of those experiencing brokenness. We pray that God pushes us into action. We pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit as we seek to fight for justice and righteousness.

### **A Prayer of Lament**

*Creator God, you have made each of us in Your image. Yet in our brokenness we have become hateful and malicious. In our brokenness we pervert Your love and Your justice and your righteousness. In our brokenness we tear others down. In our brokenness we have set up a system that oppresses our brothers and sisters of color. For hundreds of years we have refused equality for those who reflect You. May their cries break us. May their cries cut us to the core. May their cries break our hearts like they break Yours. Teach us to cry until our tears rival the sea. Teach us to weep until our breath turns into gasps. Teach us to lament until we can walk alongside all of Your children. Then teach us to love. Teach us the value of each of Your children and then teach us to raise them up. Teach us to only live and speak and act in a way that builds others up. Teach us what true justice looks like, what Your justice looks like. Teach us justice that requires mercy and not sacrifice. Teach us a justice that blesses all of Your children. In the name of Jesus who walked with those society despised, and in the power of the Holy Spirit who helps us in our weakness and communicates even when there are only groans that are too deep for words, we pray, Amen.*

### **A Prayer for Action**

*Creator God, you are a God of justice. You stand on the side of the oppressed. You fight for those who society tries to forget. You promise the poor and the hungry and the mournful that great will be their reward in heaven. But that does not excuse the here and now. You entered into the brokenness of this world not just to promise hope, but to start the healing now. May the body of Christ bring healing into our world now. May the church be your hands and Your feet to bring healing and justice to those who are crying out now. May I walk humbly in your name and look not only to my own interests, but also to the interests of others. I recognize that there are times when I am part of the problem. There are times when I break instead of heal. For this I ask your forgiveness. May I never be satisfied by merely not being part of the problem. May I yearn to be part of the solution. May I yearn to be a manifestation of Your love and of Your healing and of Your justice and of Your mercy. In the name of Jesus who showed us how to love and to heal, and in the power of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to love and to heal, we pray, Amen.*

