

Ecumenical faith resources For Worship on Jubilee Sunday 2010



*“Christ has no Body now but yours,
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.”*

Jubilee Sunday May 16, 2010

May 16, the Feast of the Ascension, is Jubilee Sunday. Scripture tells us that Jesus’ ministry in our world was finished and he was handing over to us, his followers, to continue his work for God’s Kingdom. St Teresa puts it this way: “Christ has no Body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours.”

On Jubilee Sunday, we are asked to focus on one of the root causes of endemic global poverty – the unjust and unpayable debts of many countries.

Developing countries send the equivalent of AU \$550 billion overseas each year to pay back their debts, much of which was accumulated by corrupt and undemocratic regimes of the past. They lose another AU \$230 billion every year through tax dodging by big companies. This is much greater than the AU\$60-90 billion needed each year to meet the Millennium Development Goals to halve extreme poverty, and at least 7 times more than these countries receive annually in foreign aid.

One of these countries is Haiti, now suffering not only from the effects of past economic policies but from the devastating earthquake. Find more information in the accompanying fact sheet on Haiti.

The scriptures tell us the Spirit of God has called us to be good news to the poor, to forgive each other’s debts, to heal the broken, to announce freedom to those who are imprisoned by suffering, to proclaim the Jubilee. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus gave the Law of Jubilee new meaning when he invoked it at the beginning of his mission.

Learn

Read: Leviticus 25: 8 - 55

The Law of Jubilee promoted the principle of release and restoration; redemption and personal freedom; and restructuring of social order and a foreshadowing of God’s salvation and coming reign.

The Law of Jubilee was prophetic - in its wholism and comprehensiveness, in its care for the environment and humanity, in its desire to restructure systems and relationships legally, so that everyone has the opportunity to start all over again. The rich will not gloat in their wealth, the poor do not grovel in their scarcity, and the land and other natural resources need not suffer leanness. It was prophetic of potential wrongs in the life of Israel.

The Law of Jubilee is an important study for Christians today. It is a bold, long-sighted piece of social/economic legislation that attempts to serve as a corrective measure to both the inequities and iniquities in society in its course of growth and development.

Reflect

How do we apply the essence of the Law of Jubilee in today’s world of pluralism and democracy, where there is clear delineation between church and state? We need to seek for a more creative equivalence. Perhaps the proper question should be: how can ordinary Christians help in crafting laws and policies that intimate the reality, presence and will of God in our society?

In the spirit of the Law of Jubilee, it is pertinent for us to ask: what kinds of laws/policies (national and international) do we have? Do they espouse human freedom, or put people in bondage? Can you think of three laws/policies (national and international) that go against the spirit of Jubilee? How are these laws/policies put into effect? Are there opportunities for ordinary people like us to change some of these laws or make new ones? What role can we play?

How do we apply the essence of the Law of Jubilee in today’s world of pluralism and democracy?

Pray

Include these prayers, or your own prayers of petition, in your worship on Jubilee Sunday, May 16:

Let us pray to God through Jesus Christ in whose name we are gathered, that through the Holy Spirit all people may live as one family

Response: Save us from our indifference and give us courage to work for justice.

1. For leaders, govern their hearts and minds that Your holy will of justice and forgiveness will come through their actions to all the world.

Response: Save us from our indifference and give us courage to work for justice.

2. For people who live in situations of wide disparity between the few who are rich and the many who are poor

Response: Save us from our indifference and give us courage to work for justice.

3. For all people that we may not succumb to materialism

Response: Save us from our indifference and give us courage to work for justice.

4. For powerful organisations which use weaker nations of the world as means of promoting their economic interests

Response: Save us from our indifference and give us courage to work for justice.

5. For countries where there is exploitation of natural resources and where the earth is desecrated for profit

Response: Save us from our indifference and give us courage to work for justice.

God, source of all life and truth, you are our strength and your Word is our guide. Help us to do what is right. Help us to challenge the structures of today that keep the poor oppressed by debt, while the rich profit. Help us take action and proclaim freedom for the poor. We ask this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Act

Participate with Jubilee Australia in digging to the roots of global poverty - exposing and challenging unjust laws and practices that hurt the poor and marginalised, and speaking up for policies which reflect the spirit of Jubilee.

1. Dig a little deeper, to the roots of poverty

Distribute the accompanying Fact Sheet to your congregation, group or school to learn more about the historical and political roots of Haiti's poverty.

2. Join the ROBIN HOOD TAX campaign. We need your help right now.

The Robin Hood Tax is a worldwide initiative to reduce global financial instability. The tiny levy on international financial transactions – not retail banking – has the power to raise hundreds of billions every year. It could give a vital boost to health care, our schools – as well as tackling poverty and climate change around the world.

Jubilee Australia is spearheading a broad alliance of over 20 Australian groups whose goal is to build on the current momentum from the global financial crisis to see a Robin Hood (Financial Transactions) Tax endorsed by the Australian Government at the G20 in June. Learn more and add your voice at www.robinhoodtax.org.au

3. Become a member of Jubilee Australia

Your church, social justice group or school can become one of Jubilee Australia's valued member groups. Member groups make an annual financial contribution of \$100. We will send a Poster to display in your common area, and notice of opportunities to take action.

To join, [email info@jubileeaustralia.org](mailto:info@jubileeaustralia.org)

***Debt Prayer Bookmarks available from PEJ Centre, Columban Mission Institute**

www.columban.org.au/our-works/peace-ecology-justice/resources/debt-prayer/

These materials have been prepared in partnership with our friends at Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice, Columban Mission Institute. We thank Coordinator Anne Lanyon for her commitment to Jubilee Australia.

Thank you also to our friends at Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture (ISACC), Philippines, for thoughtful analysis on the Law of Jubilee in publication *Unequal Worlds*; extracts from which have been used above.



Jubilee Australia emerged out of the successful international Jubilee 2000 Drop the Debt movement. Today, Jubilee plays a unique role in Australia. Through academic-based research we expose the underlying causes of poverty, including the debt burdens of poor countries and the unjust policies that led to its accumulation. By lobbying the Australian Government we work toward changing the policies and structures that perpetuate poverty and injustice.

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