

# **Justice, Faith & Action**

Just Living : Conference on Living Justly in the world today

Daleep Mukarji

# Bible References (NIV)

“What does the Lord require of you? To **act justly** and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” Micah 6:8

“**Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves**, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Proverbs 31:8-9

“For **I, the Lord, love justice**; I hate robbery and wrongdoing” Isaiah 61:8

# Jesus' Mandate:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to **bring good news to the poor**. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free.” Luke 4:18 and then in vs 21 Jesus says “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

**“I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly”** John 10:10

# John Wesley and Social Justice

“ There is no holiness without social holiness”

**“Gain all you can, save all you can and give all you can.”** Wesley demanded his followers were good stewards of wealth. He earned quite a bit of money from his published writings but he lived and died in relative poverty. He used his earnings to help other people.

**“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can and in all the ways you can, in all the places you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can”**

Wesley was convinced slavery was atrocious and in 1774 he wrote “Thoughts Upon Slavery” presenting his case for abolition.

# The World Today: Globally

- Over 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty
- 800 million people will go to bed hungry today
- 12 million children will die this year before their fifth birthday
- Over 2 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water
- 3 of the world's richest people control more wealth than 600 million
- UN estimates unfair trade rules deny poor people US\$ 700 billion/year
- Tax laws and tax avoidance by big corporations and some world leaders involves more money than all the aid funds sent to developing countries

# The World Today: In the UK

## **The UK.....the sixth largest economy in the world!**

- 1 in 5 people live in relative poverty (over 14.1 million people and rising)
- 1 in 3 children live in poverty (about 4.2 million children and rising)
- Food banks serve over half a million people every year regularly
- Poverty has doubled since early 1980s from 14% to 33% of households
- Two thirds of those in poverty are in work (part time, low wage or insecure contracts)
- Welfare Reform has contributed to poverty as have austerity/cuts, benefit sanctions etc.

(I shall focus on the UK scene mostly)

# Poverty in a world of plenty...Inequality

- Poverty kills, dehumanises and denies rights
- Children grow up deprived in many ways....go hungry, do less well in school, unable to find jobs, experience more illness and diseases etc.
- People experience discrimination, exploitation, exclusion in society
- Inequality has increased by 42% since 1977 (measured by the Gini Coefficient); Richest 10% households own 850 X the wealth of the poorest 10%. Out of 35 OECD countries Britain ranks 7<sup>th</sup>. America is much worse.
- People who are poor have little or no power to influence decisions that effect their future.
- Poverty is not about facts...it is about people all made in God's image, everyone a child of God and entitled to be able to fulfil their potential.

# Severe Poverty is a scandal: it is unjust

- Basic needs and services can and should be available to all
- Governments have a responsibility for the security and safety of their citizens; we make choices to spend and often poverty is man made.
- Poverty creates insecurity, uncertainty and people get trapped in a cycle of poverty and exclusion; people need to be helped out.
- The right wing press, politicians, the rich elite, businesses and even sometimes people from the church perpetuate the myth that the poor have caused this on themselves; they often misrepresent the poor. Christians have a responsibility to challenge this injustice.



# “The Lies we tell Ourselves” (2013 JPIT Report)

1. **“They are lazy and do not want to work.”** Yet the majority of children in poverty are from working households. In-work poverty.
2. **“They are addicted to drink and drugs.”** Fewer than 4% of benefit claimants report any form of addiction.
3. **“They are not really poor-they just don’t manage their money properly.”** Statistics show the poorest spend their money carefully.
4. **“They are on the fiddle.”** Less than 0.9% of the welfare budget is lost to fraud. Much less than tax avoidance!!
5. **“They have an easy life...and opt to be on benefits as a lifestyle choice.”**  
This is just not true especially for the ill & the unemployed

(Methodist Church, Church of Scotland, Baptist Union of Great Britain & URC, Report)

# What does God want of us: To Act for Justice.

- Know the facts, educate ourselves, our communities and families
- Be prepared to hold the rich, our government, multi national corporations and the powerful to account
- Become part of a movement for social justice and change
- In our personal lives make choices on what we can do to make it a fair and just world.....in the perspective of the Kingdom of God
- Work with others....people of all faiths and none, labour unions, Citizens UK, schools, colleges and universities and people of goodwill
- Use our economic, political, social and spiritual power to make a difference; advocacy, campaigning and social actions for change

# Letters to Christians (General Election 2017)

**“An authentic faith.....always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.”** ( Pope Francis) These words encourage us to approach this General Election...to consider carefully all that is at stake. (Catholic Bishops of England & Wales)

“The UK, when at its best, has been represented by a sense of not living for ourselves, but by **a deeper concern for the weak, poor and marginalised and for the common good.** At home that includes education for all, the need for urgent and serious solutions to our housing challenges, the importance of creating communities as well as buildings and a confident and flourishing health service that gives support to all—especially the vulnerable.

Archbishops of Canterbury and York

# Can we make a difference? We have and will!

Over the years:

- Anti slavery movement: William Wilberforce and others
- Prison reform, the Wesleys were an influence in prison reform and inspired by Susanna Wesley they earned a reputation as pioneers in education
- Labour reforms.....Trade Unions (Methodists and others involved)
- Anti Apartheid movement
- Fairtrade and the Trade Justice Movement
- Campaign for more international aid and to 'Make Poverty History'
- Jubilee 2000 Debt Campaign and ongoing actions for debt relief
- Others: Landmines, supermarkets campaign, tax justice, global march against child labour, climate justice etc. Also on local and national issues

# Why should Christians be involved

- What we see is unfair, unethical and blatant injustice
- It makes us angry, we want to do something; challenge injustice
- Because of our faith and the teachings of Jesus: Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself; discipleship can be costly!
- The Old Testament is full of the prophets calling for justice and action
- James 2: 14-17: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say that you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ....So faith by itself, if it has no action is dead.”

# Jesus commissions and commands us

- Jesus calls his disciples together and gave them power and authority and **sent them out “to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal”**  
Luke 9: 2
- If we feed the hungry, give water to those who are thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked and visit the sick and those in prison we are serving Jesus. **“Truly I tell you this, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.”**  
Matthew 25: 40
- **“ Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you”** John 20: 21

# Mission in Christ's Way

- It is about discipleship, following the message and teachings of Christ
- It is life long and whole life commitment
- It is putting our faith into action
- It is transforming and serving the world particularly the poor and excluded
- It is local, national and global
- It is about being prophetic when necessary
- It gives meaning and purpose to our lives

# We live in a broken, unjust and sick world!

- **We can be agents of healing**....of the Kingdom of God with a vision that another more just, inclusive, healthy and sustainable world is possible. All humans have a right to dignity, basic needs being satisfied and being accepted equally as our brothers and sisters
- **We need to understand the root causes of poverty and exclusion**, the misuse of power and to challenge the unjust structures and systems that keep people and nations in poverty
- **Live simply and take action so that others can simply live** where need for love, food, water, shelter, education etc. are satisfied
- It requires **we put our values, convictions and faith into action**



# Some problems faced in the world today

- **Poverty, Inequality and disparity** that denies basic needs and rights to some people, particularly the weak and vulnerable.
- **Discrimination and marginalisation** that allows some people to be excluded because of their gender, race, colour, sexuality and age
- **Destruction of the planet**, climate change and air pollution
- **Greed and unjust financial and trade structures**, intertwined with the recent economic, social and ecological crises, that cause immense suffering among those impoverished and marginalised
- **Unemployment, insecurity of work and low wages**
- **Refugee crisis, migration and the plight of asylum seekers**

# Markets, Money and Materialism

We have a new trinity of 'gods' where Markets, Money and Materialism are the new faith.

We are living in a world in which faith in mammon threatens the credibility of the gospel. **People believe that the global market will save the world and all the people in it through unlimited growth where the benefits will trickle down. This is a myth.** It threatens the economic and spiritual life of people and all of creation. There is economic and ecological injustice and a crisis of values and priorities at a global scale. Globalisation is creating a populist reaction in many countries with no alternative ideology or vision of the future being offered. "Me or my country first" cannot work for all.

# Just Living: some suggestions for each of us

- How we invest our money and the banks we use, are these ethical ?
- What we buy and the shops we go to?
- Do we support the Living wage payment in society?
- Support charities that work on child poverty and neglect (AFC etc.)
- The values and practices we share with our children and families
- Consider our carbon footprint and how we tackle global warming
- Support organisations that can campaign for change (Citizens UK etc.)
- Discuss what 'Just Living' means today; even how we vote?

# We are people of hope and justice

We may feel a sense of hopelessness, of being disempowered and resigned to the facts. It all seems so overwhelming. **We cannot give up.**

- Working with those who are poor and marginalised we need to educate and mobilise them and others to stand up for their rights. It is about empowerment and building a movement for change.
- We need to believe things can and will change... a belief in the present and coming reality of the Kingdom which gives meaning and purpose to our lives. **Hope is about our vision and acting on it, as faithful disciples, for the transformation of the world.**
- Our mission cannot be apolitical if we want to build a better world.

# Our vision of the Kingdom of God

We know another kind of world is possible and we must speak of it and promote it as our present model of growth and development is neither sustainable nor just. Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom where righteousness, love and inclusion are central to his message of good news.

Our vision of a different society must have spiritual, economic, social, moral, political and ethical dimensions as it offers people an alternative that is just and more equal.

This new world order is our reality of something of the Kingdom of God here and now and in the future.

**Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven.**