



The Church of Scotland
World Mission Council



Prayer and Reflection for Debt Justice

Hymn CH4 543 Longing for light we wait in darkness

You may like to take a few moments to share memories of Make Poverty History or to tell each other experiences you have had of joining in campaigning for economic justice.

Prayer:

Loving God, as we look back to Make Poverty History, and the past ten years of campaigning, we thank you for positive changes which have been made. We thank you that more children now complete Primary School, that fewer women die in childbirth and that vulture funds can no longer operate in British soil. We thank you that successful debt campaigns mean that for some countries debt repayments have significantly fallen leading to the provision of better healthcare and education. Thank you for Jubilee Scotland and for all organisations which encourage economic justice. Help us to work together and to use our skills to make our world a fairer and better place, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Reading : Luke Chapter 19 verses 1-10

Reflection

In first century Palestine tax was one of the obvious injustices facing ordinary people. The Roman authorities insisted on payment of taxes to fund their military and used local agents who were able to use threats of violence to extract more money than was owed as tax.

As a wealthy but lonely chief tax collector who had cheated many people Zacchaeus reminds us of today's tax cheats who enjoy their undeserved wealth no matter at what cost to others. His greed and willingness to take more than was owed from people also reminds us about other ways in which our world's resources are unfairly shared, with more aid being given as loans not grants and with many countries being burdened by high debt repayments. The scale of the problem is huge. In 2014 Jubilee Debt Campaign and Health Poverty Action used World Bank data to calculate that for every \$1 given to Africa as 'aid', over \$6 was lost in debt repayments, tax avoidance, multinational company profits and other ways money was taken out of the continent.

But look at what happened after Jesus had talked to Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus changes and gives away half of his wealth and he returns four times the amount to anyone he has defrauded. This inspiring story shows one way in which Jesus brought good news to the poor.

In spite of the successes of Make Poverty History and other campaigns we know that many countries are still really burdened by high debt payments and that many are seeing their debt burdens grow. We know that the current global economic system favours the very wealthy.

So, encouraged by the surprising willingness of Zacchaeus to right wrongs let's take action to make our world fairer. Let's try to understand the issues and to play our part in bringing good news to the poor.

Time for quiet reflection

(You will need pieces of paper for people to write their commitments on. These could be collected in a basket or more elaborately hung on something like the branch of a tree. If you choose the tree option (picking up the role the tree played in the story of Zacchaeus) then you could perhaps take the branch along to Sunday worship with your commitments displayed, include some relevant prayers in your service and encourage other people to add their commitments.)

Invite those present to spend a few minutes in quiet reflection about what actions they might take to encourage debt justice. Invite them to write one or more commitments on a piece of paper and to hang them on the branch or put them in the basket.

Prayer

Loving God, inspire us to join with others to play our part in securing debt justice and in making the world's economic systems fairer. Help us to take actions which will make a positive difference to the lives of people and will encourage others to get involved and to become well informed, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn CH4 259 Beauty for brokenness

(Information to help people write or email their MPs could be handed out before people go home.)