



2 Timothy 3:14—4:5; Psalm 121; Luke 18:1-8

Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (October 19, 2025)

The sum of all the prayers that Jesus uttered for the fulfilment of God's justice on earth is the Lord's Prayer. We pray for justice when we pray: "*Our Father*, who art in heaven. *Hallowed* be thy name. Thy Kingdom *come*. Thy will be *done* on earth as it is in heaven."

We do not pray to any god but to "*our*" God, and not just to a distant, aloof and supreme Entity but to our "*Father*." We have a relationship with our God: we are known and loved, and in Jesus and through the Spirit we know and love God.

We pray for the necessary "daily bread" that nurtures us, enlightens us and emboldens us for participation in God's Kingdom. We pray for forgiveness, the one we need to receive and the one we need to offer which creates the premises for God's Kingdom of reconciliation and solidifies community. We pray for strength in times of difficulties and temptation, so we remain consistently faithful and just, that is, aligned with God's will. We pray for deliverance from evil which is a negation of God's peace.

As believers, we are called to seek and hope for the daily realization of God's justice in all aspects of life. The prayer is

not just a request for personal guidance but a communal longing for a world where God's will shapes our actions, relationships, and institutions.

In reciting this prayer, we acknowledge our desire for a society where divine justice, marked by mercy and righteousness, becomes a reality, not just in heaven but here on earth. The Lord's Prayer thus becomes a spiritual commitment to work toward justice in our communities, reflecting the values and principles that Christ taught.

When we realize we have not been faithful to the divine plan, we confess and beat our breasts: we confess that our intentions have not been pure but marred by jealousy, arrogance and hatred. We admit our talking has not been truthful nor just; we have blurred the truth or deceitfully disregarded it; we have been quick to assign blame and slow in admitting responsibility. We acknowledge that our actions and at times our lack of action have not contributed to everybody's wellbeing. In other words, we have sinned against both heaven and earth, and consequently, God's will has not been done either in heaven or on earth.

Social norms, rules, regulations, and commandments are established not to impose limitations or subdue us, but to safeguard and enhance everybody's quality of life. They constitute an essential component of the social contract, serving the well-being and stability of the community.

Violating these laws erodes trust within the community and compromises the community's survival.

Today, we hear Paul reflecting on the theological concept that will eventually end up in the Creed: Jesus is set to judge the living and the dead (2 Tim 4:1).¹ Jesus clearly announced that he did not come to judge but to save the world. It's the divinely inspired Word of Truth (2 Tim 3:16-17) that sets the criteria for righteous living.² Jesus *is* that Word, obviously.

So, ultimately, it is God who does the judging: authority (to determine the truth), glory (to illumine and guide) and power (to redeem and save) resides in God.³ God's judgment is not capricious but dependably based on God's providential and merciful plan for the world established from the beginning. A life of righteousness is a life lived in full trust of the vision of God for creation as expressed in the Scriptures. God found pleasure in giving shape to creation, and all was "good."⁴

In the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8), Jesus illustrates God's justice as unwavering and compassionate. Jesus invites believers to be confident in prayer not because God needs nudging like the corrupt judge of the parable, but because God is ready to grant justice. The judge ultimately relents albeit grudgingly. God instead finds pleasure in providing justice...because that's what God does.

¹ See also Acts 10:42; 17:31; 1 Peter 4:5; Matthew 25:31-46

² John 3:17-18; 12:47-50

³ 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Jude 1:25; Ephesians 1:20-22; 5:8-14

⁴ Romans 1:16-17; Habakkuk 2:4; Psalm 146

In fact, God listens to the cry of the poor and consistently responds with mercy and fairness. God's judgment is rooted in steadfast love and a desire for true justice, not arbitrary or unpredictable decisions. Throughout the Bible, God speaks about the importance of treating everyone fairly and caring for the needs of the most disadvantaged.⁵

Psalm 146 expresses this concept beautifully:

¹Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

²I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

³Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortals, in whom there is no help.

⁴When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.

⁵Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,

⁶who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

⁸ the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

⁵ Psalm 41:1-2; 12:5; 35:10; 72:4; 103:6; 146...just to quote some of the psalms!

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.

⁹The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the Lord!

When I mention the Church's commitment to "social justice," people look at me as if I came from another planet. We have a common understanding of what justice means and frequently we refer to the administration of punishment for a broken law and a crime committed.

A quick google search will bring this up:

Justice is the principle of *fairness* and the just administration of the law, which involves treating people *impartially* and *equally* according to established *legal processes*.

Our US legal system declares that "all are equal before the law" or, said in the negative form, "no one is above the law."

In a fair system, a government holds people accountable for breaking the law by engaging in controlled force, by following due process, and by applying proportionate and humane punishment. When a government assumes an absolute if not divine mandate, oversteps its boundaries, abuses it's

power, ignores and disrespects the law, lacks transparency, over-reacts to people's protest and suspends civil rights, it is time for people to realize that there is a breach of the social contract and, for believers, a misalignment with God's will.

Now, obviously, not everyone is a believer and espouses God's mandate to live a righteous life as expressed in the Bible.⁶ But even the unbeliever understands the universal ethical principle of the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you would like others to treat you." Solidarity towards those who suffer will move one to compassion and compassion to justice: right judgment, right speech, right action.

The Church's prophetic ministry is to be ambassadors of this truth and bring about reconciliation.⁷ Visit the [Justice Portal](#)⁸ for a sense of what the ELCA stands for.

Methodist pastor and author, James Howell, ponders:

"It seems that God does not merely want us to want justice, or to wish justice would happen. God doesn't say 'Think about justice' or 'Campaign for justice' or even 'Pray for justice.' Justice reveals what is in the heart of God. *Justice* is God's dream for a special kind of community... A just society is the one where everyone

⁶ [30 Powerful bible verses about the righteous \(Full Commentary\) - Bible Study For You](#)

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

⁸⁸ <https://www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/justice-portal>

belongs, where the neediest are taken good care of,
where no one is hungry or disenfranchised.”⁹

God’s Kingdom of justice and peace is here and not yet. It’s within us¹⁰ and all creation is eagerly waiting for the moment the children of God will be revealed as practitioners of justice.¹¹

May we find strength and guidance in the Word of Truth that gives Life and renews Hope. May the will of God be done even through me. Amen.

⁹ James Howell, What Does the Lord Require?

¹⁰ Luke 17:21

¹¹ Romans 8:19