

Hymn Reflection by Malcolm Sturgess

John Bell, of The Iona Community, and the Wild Goose Resource Group, is, without any doubt, one of the best hymn writers of the last half-century. Ian Bradley says he is the most charismatic person in the British church, and Bishop Edward Darling says he has done for Scotland what John Wesley did for England. John says he and his hymn-writing partner, Graham Maule, who died last Christmas at the age of 61, do "not set out to be intellectual, but to deal with existential realities". Archbishop Rowan Williams says, "Together they worked hard at crafting a wholly distinctive page in the annals of contemporary English-language hymnody". John himself says there was no such thing as "gentle Jesus, meek and mild". The word "gentle" does not occur anywhere in the Gospels. In the raising of Lazarus and elsewhere there is anger. They often set their hymns to folk tunes, including this one, which goes to *The Salley Gardens*.

As this is a long hymn, I will not write much myself, but let it speak for itself.

Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,
informed of God's own bias, we ponder once again:
"How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind?
How long dare vain self-interest turn prayer and pity blind?"

From those forever victims of heartless human greed,
their cruel plight composes a litany of need:
"Where are the fruits of justice? Where are the signs of peace?
When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?"

From those forever shackled to what their wealth can buy,
the fear of lost advantage provokes the bitter cry:
"Don't query our position! Don't criticize our wealth!
Don't mention those exploited by politics and stealth!"

To God, who through the prophets proclaimed a different age,
we offer earth's indifference, its agony and rage:
"When will the wrongs be righted? When will the kingdom come?
When will the world be generous to all instead of some?"

God asks, "Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will listen, will prophesy and preach?
And who, when few bid welcome, will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?"

Amused in someone's kitchen, asleep in someone's boat,
attuned to what the ancients exposed, proclaimed and wrote,
a saviour without safety, a tradesman without tools,
has come to tip the balance with fishermen and fools.

Why are there inequalities in our world?



A Conversation from the Prophet Micah – Chapter 6, verses 1-8

Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.
Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations of the earth;
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

"O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you? Answer me!
For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;
and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD."

"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Matthew – Chapter 25, verses 31-40

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

WHY IS THERE INEQUALITY IN THE WORLD? A reflection by Revd Penny Joyce.

We believe as Christians that God made the world and as a result, has authority over it. We have been placed on earth as his stewards and we are asked to live lives that reflect the person and values of Jesus...who was God incarnate. However society does not always work to the same values. So it is incumbent upon us to share Christian values to help break the inequalities within the world. I can hear you saying...that's a tall order! During May and June, issues related to 'inequality' have been starkly revealed, for instance people were shocked and horrified by acts of racial aggression which has renewed the cry that 'Black Lives Matter'. Then a 22 year old, quietly spoken footballer, gave the government an insight into how it feels to be poor with not enough money for food during school holidays. His intervention led to a U turn by the government, which will change the quality of lives of the underprivileged children in our towns and cities this summer. Two people, two situations and two amazing sea changes in the mind set of society today.

Inequality has always been with us, and is usually fostered by greed, bigotry, a lust for power, and dare I say apathy. Often our response is that the issues are 'too big' for us as individuals to either tackle or change. Yet just two people have had a huge impact on the world's understanding of inequality.

We as Christians cannot personally tackle all the world's inequalities, but we can ask God our Father to lay a 'passion' on our hearts so that we can focus on just one inequality in his world. An example might be the lack of clean water! Join the 'Toilet twinning' initiative, provide a toilet to a third world village, or perhaps give money to Water Aid? Pray and then nourish your God given passion!

In Matthew 25 v 35 Jesus says '**.....For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...**'

I, the Lord of sea and sky is a contemporary hymn by Dan Schutte, and a favourite at ordination services.

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
all who dwell in dark and sin, my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright. Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Refrain: Here I am Lord, is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them, they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them, whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them, my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide, till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them ,whom shall send?