

Transcript for Chapel Service – w/c 16 June 2020
[from Lectio365 – P.R.A.Y.]

“I Can't Breathe”
by
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“Today is Monday the 8th of June. Exactly two weeks ago, George Floyd was killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis, sparking protests around the world.

In today's Lectio 365 we're going to prayerfully explore the reality of racism in our world, and even in our own hearts.”

Pause

“As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.”

Prayer of Approach

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

Rejoice and Reflect

“I choose to rejoice today in God's love and justice for all nations, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 22”:

*The poor will eat and be satisfied.
All who seek the Lord will praise him.
Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.
The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him.
All the families of the nations will bow down before him.
For royal power belongs to the Lord.
He rules all the nations.
Psalm 22:26-28*

“Today, as I remember George Floyd, I turn to a part of the Bible that has much to say about the purpose of power, the future of nations and the way that God Himself was oppressed and innocently killed by evil men.”

The Word of God - Philippians 2:5-11

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“I grew up in a South African township under the evil institutionalised racism of apartheid. Where the colour of my skin determined which hospital I would be born in; and, what kind of care my mother and I would receive. To be black was to be marginalised, despised, silenced and oppressed.

I can remember days, as a child, when my mother would come home barely walking, with a swollen, bruised face and a purple eye. Embarrassed to tell us what had happened when we asked, she would try and crack a smile with her battered face and say ‘*ke wele bohloko.*’ Meaning, ‘I had a really bad fall at work.’

Later that night, when we went to bed in the small corrugated iron shack that housed six of us, we would hear her tell our father that she had been beaten by her employers for dropping their plates and not feeding their dogs at the right time. Experiences like these, of which there were many, have left their mark on me and my siblings and a sense of worthlessness and helplessness to see our mother so despised and stripped off her dignity.

It is only in Christ that I’ve found my true identity as a Son of God, my dignity as a black man made in God’s image. George Floyd’s murder and his last words “I can’t breathe” have broken my heart, but they have also fired me up to hope and pray that perhaps now things can begin to change.

This passage promises that one day, perhaps quite soon, every tribe and tongue will finally bow the knee - not before a flag, but before the Lord Jesus Christ. On that wonderful day, every culture will bring its own unique revelation - its food, its language, its music - as equals at the coronation of an innocent Middle-Eastern man, killed without justice and exalted by God to the highest place.”

Ask

“As I bow the knee today before You Jesus, I ask You to search my heart. Show me where I am proud and prejudiced against those who are different to me because of their race, or their beliefs or their way of life. Change my heart. Start the revolution in me.”

“Jesus turns power and privilege on its head. He had everything but He made Himself nothing. He swapped supremacy for servanthood.

And so, I pray now for world leaders, asking You Lord to bring them to their knees, to prick their consciences today, that they might use their power on behalf of the powerless, to reconcile, heal and make peace.”

Yield

“As I return to the passage, I notice its shape - like the letter ‘V’. First the downward slope of Christ’s consistent self-sacrifice, and then at its lowest point, the upward trajectory as God raises him up.”

The Word of God - *Philippians 2:5-11*

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and gave him the name that is above every name,
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and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”

“The original Greek word used here to describe Christ’s self-emptying is ‘kenosis’. It’s one of the most important concepts in Orthodox theology. Kenosis is not just something to be admired in Jesus; it is also something to be copied in my own life too. The way of Jesus means emptying myself of power, privilege and possessions again and again for the sake of the least, the last and the lost, trusting the Lord to replenish what I relinquish and to raise me up in due course.”

Yielding Prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ, I often ask You to fill me but today I choose to empty myself for Your glory. Give me opportunities in the coming week to pour my resources out for someone who is vulnerable, to spend my sense of entitlement in the service of someone who feels forgotten, and to give my attention and admiration to someone from another race or culture.”

Yielding Promise

“Considering the pain and anger in my world right now I thank you, Lord, that you’ve promised, one day, there will be, ‘a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb’.” (Revelation 7:9)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.