
National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

December 6 Service 2014

Distributed by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada



This service was written for the Women's Inter-Church Council by
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A new day will dawn on us
from above

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Saturday, December 6, 2014

Welcome

Welcome to a service to remember those women who are and have been the victims of violence. We recognize that this may be a particularly personal time for you and we pray that you will feel a sense of God's presence.

Opening Prayer

We pray to you, O God;
You hear our voice in the morning;
**At sunrise we offer our prayers
and wait for your answer.**

In you, Eternal One
And through your Son, Jesus Christ,
We find the beginning and end of all things.
In him, we find hope, forgiveness, and
Courage for new beginnings.

**Let then, O God,
The fresh winds of your Spirit
Sweep into our lives this day,
So that this act of worship
And the times to follow
May become a time of renewal
And rededication to your service.**

Suggested Hymn: *Every Morning Mercies New*
OR God Himself is With Us OR Holy, Holy, Holy

Scripture Reading

This is what the Lord says:

"A voice is heard in Ramah,
mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children

Things you can do now to help eliminate violence against women

- ✚ Practice peace. Help promote peaceful and respectful behaviours by modeling them as often as possible.
- ✚ Encourage education and equality.
- ✚ Take the "numb" out of the numbers. The statistics on gender violence can be discouraging, but they can also move you to act. Start with something manageable, like the power of one: one dollar to a women's shelter, one signature on the petition for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women, or one word of support.
- ✚ Advocate for access. A woman experiencing violence needs easy access to support and services regardless of the language she speaks, her legal status in Canada, or her economic resources.
- ✚ Build on your success. Every step you take towards eliminating violence against women is a step forward.

Light the candle. Pray for hope. Pray for healing.

Let us live with the words of promise, offering hope to others, even as we weep.

Suggested Hymn: *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*

Prayer

As a community of God let us come together with those who have gone before us praying the words that Jesus taught us. As a diverse community please use the language or words that have the most meaning for you.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours.
Forever and ever.**

Amen.

Blessing (Based on 2 Cor. 13:13)

May the grace of Christ which daily renews us
And the love of God which enables us to love all
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which unites us in one body,
Make us eager to obey the will of God until we meet again,
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Suggested Hymn: *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*

and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more." (NIV, Jer. 31:15)

Reflection

These words are given to us by God through the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet who preached that God's nation of Israel needed to turn back to God as the source of their hope. The nation of Israel had turned from trusting God for their well-being, instead turning to other countries and forming political alliances which included pledges to take part in war. Israel, which was to be a nation that highlighted God's will for the people, had stopped caring for the weakest of their community: the widows and orphans. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, God calls Israel to, not only turn back to him, but to keep the promise to care for the poor and oppressed within their community. This was not a nation that reflected the goodness and mercy of God.

By the time Jeremiah gave us the image of Rachel weeping, he saw a nation in chaos. Internal power struggles had divided the country and now the people of the country were being forced to relocate to Babylon to be ruled by their king.

The verse refers to Rachel, considered the mother of the Israelites. Jeremiah speaks of her mourning and weeping as she sees a nation divided amongst itself and scattered to other lands. She weeps, not just for the children of the day, but for the lost generations. To lose generations of children is to lose the future community – the hope of existence.

It is with this thought that we come here this morning. We have lost many generations because of violence done to women. Women have been killed who might have had families, daughters and sons. Schools have lost the voices of women who had questions and great insights to offer. The marketplace has lost the ingenuity of women who could have had new ways and solutions to offer. Our communities have suffered the loss in ways that we cannot imagine as we have empty places around us that we cannot always see.

The sin of violence takes not just these women, but families. Children are nurtured in environments where harsh words or physical abuse reign. Some carry a burden of guilt of not being able to stop the violence, others lose hope in family, some lose hope in God. Sadly, some

children will never learn a new way of relating to others and the violence will continue throughout their lives, whether as a victim of violence or as an abuser who had no models of healthy relationships.

It is not supposed to be like this. God created male and female and saw that they were good. We were created to live harmoniously in community. Yet, we read Jeremiah's words again, in Matthew 2:18, as Matthew writes about the time of the birth of Christ:

"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Matthew uses these words to talk of the children killed by King Herod in Herod's attempt to kill the Christ child. Jesus survived until his own violent death on the cross.

Many people have reflected on the violence found in the Bible and wondered that Christians use it as their book of life. Yet the cruelty comes from our own power struggle on earth. We desire to rule others; we fear those we do not understand; we may learn how to be a victim or an abuser, but not what it means to be a child of God. It is the death of Christ and a new life in him that brings hope, but it is a paradox we do not always easily understand. To know who we are in Christ is to see Christ in the other, with no desire to rule over him, with no fear of him, with no sense that one must dominate and one must be dominated in order to be in relationship.

This is hope in the midst of violence. One can only turn to God for this hope. It is a hope that, in the dawn of this new day, things will be different. The difference will require our engagement with this hope with a renewed way of seeing community and with a responsibility for those around us that causes us to speak up and to act. Those of us who believe that "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" have enough hope to enter into the chaos where Christ is already at work. This is work for everyone, not just the strong, as it is the Spirit who gives us what we need to join in this work. Since it is God's work, we do not push our way through complex problems looking for a quick solution. Rather we rely on God's timing and wisdom to respond to chaos in his way. His way may seem weak, but our hope reveals the power that Christ had when the powers of this world stripped him of dignity, justice and life.

Prayer of Response

We offer ourselves to you, O God, our Creator.

We offer our hands.

Use healing touch to comfort, sisters, brothers and children who are afraid.

We offer our eyes and ears.

May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence so that all may have someone with them in their pain and confusion.

We offer our hearts and our tears as their hurt and sorrow echo within us.

May we be healed as we embrace each other.

We offer our anger.

Make it a passion for justice.

We offer all our skills.

Use our gifts to end violence.

We offer our faith, our hope, our love.

May our encounters with violence bring us closer to you and to each other.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ, who died a violent death so that we may live. Amen

Suggested Hymn: *Blest be the Tie that Binds*
OR *Breathe on me Breath of God*

God's Response:

When God gave Jeremiah the words of Rachel, he acknowledged the great chaos and loss of hope. However, he offered these words of promise in the next verse:

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord:

"Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears,
for there is a reward for your work,
declares the Lord,
and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. (NIV Jer. 31:15)

When Matthew used those words at the time of the violence of King Herod he knew the next verses - that Rachel's weeping was not the end of the story, that there was hope to come even in the midst of slaughter.