

# Jesus was no stranger to the cry for justice.

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by Elli Atchison

Throughout Scripture, God's demand for justice is repeatedly seen. His righteousness cannot allow sin to go unpunished forever. However, in His patient love, God often withholds the punishment that His justice demands, giving every opportunity for His people to repent and return their hearts to Him. (2 Peter 3:9)

Jesus came to this earth *to be THE answer* to God's ultimate call for justice. Though He was blameless in every way, Jesus willingly took the weight of the world's sin upon Himself. He suffered on the cross and paid the ransom of God's justice through His own blood. This ultimate act of amazing love and mercy by Jesus was to prevent His beloved children from *facing the consequences of justice* that our sins rightfully deserve. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."* (John 3:16-17)

*So, what would Jesus say to Palestinian Christians today?* Many of these faithful followers can trace their family histories all the way back to the birth of Christian community after Pentecost. But the daily pressures and hardships of living under military occupation for 49 years have contributed to a great migration of the native Christians from the land. It is estimated that today less than 2% of all Palestinians living the Occupied Territories self-identify as Christians. Today, they are called the "living stones."

I think Jesus would hold a very special place in His heart for these people. He would have much to say to encourage them in their daily struggles. Gently, He would remind them of the same truths He gave to his disciples in their last days together. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Only in Christ will you find peace. (John 16:33)

Jesus would go on to empathize with their pain. He knows what it's like to be hated. The world hated Him, too. But these Palestinian Christians are His followers, because *He chose them*. And they are called to be part of His Kingdom, not part of this world (John 15:16). The world does not listen to His words, *"but, my sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me."* (John 10:27) He would urge His beloved living stones to carry the heavy burden of their cross, including life under occupation, and follow Him in trust, every day. (Luke 9:23)

However following Jesus does not mean to be passive in the face of injustice. Through most of the Gospels, we see Jesus' calm and gentle ways. However, injustice against the vulnerable made Him very angry. And He acted upon this emotion with a great public stand and protest in Jerusalem. *"Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and benches of those selling doves and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts."* (Mark 11:15-16)

It was not just that the house of God had been turned into a place of business, but that people were charging high fees for required sacrifices – fees that would have likely been burdensome to both the local poor and the people who had traveled a long way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. It was a corrupt system that prioritized money over the ability of people to worship.

I think Jesus would have a strong message to the Christian community as a whole. To those of us living in the outside world, He would remind us of the need to speak out, take a physical stand, and to be steadfast in our prayers and petitions for justice in the Holy Land. Like the parable of the persistent widow who would not give up in her plea for justice, we too should do the same for our brothers and sisters in their times of suffering. In this parable, even the judge who did not fear God eventually gave in to her constant pleas. *"Will God not bring about justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"* (Luke 18:4-8)

Let Him find us, His chosen ones, faithfully listening and following Him.

Dear Jesus,

You know that it is not easy to suffer under the injustices of this world. As Your followers, we are not promised to have an easy path through life. But You did promise to walk beside us along the journey. Help us remember to embrace any suffering because it helps us grow closer to you. Strengthen our Palestinian brothers and sisters in their daily struggles. Comfort them with the peace of Your presence. Help us all to continue to speak out and to pray without ceasing as our hearts cry out for justice. May we trust in You to bring justice to the world in Your way and Your time. May our hope always be in You.

In your holy name we pray,

Amen