

Song 85 for 21 June

Two lines from an old song that have confounded, provoked, soothed and gathered.

A song for exiles:

for those coming out of exile,

for those who have exiled others,

for those who remain in exile.

This is Song 85.

An old song that might bring new life, new angles, soft landings, deep comfort.

An old song with words and a lost tune and missing chords.

Perhaps we make and remake this song as we learn to sing it together,

faltering at first, striving for union.

The original words were in Hebrew, a desert language

familiar to wrestling with exile, despair, contradiction, delight, deliverance;

a language with a long history of trying to describe the far-away-close Divine

and the reaching-falling-limping-longings of what it is to be human.

It's from the book of Psalms – a songbook brimming with comfort, challenge, healing, hope.

Not a song for the faint hearted.

In a version I know, Song 85 verse ten says

Mercy and Truth have met together. Justice and Peace have kissed.

An embrace; kisses; bodies; words much used, abused, and sought after.

Mercy, truth, Justice and peace

Dangerous words. Hard to say. Hard to hear. Often conflicted.

We often flinch at the mention of conflict.

Four voices:

Mercy, Truth, Justice, Peace

What is the loudest voice right now?

In your head, on your tongue, in society?

Listen.....

Here is the voice of **Mercy** – what is she saying? She is singing:

I am acceptance

I am compassion

I am reaching out to the broken

I am new beginnings

I am letting go

It's a quiet voice - mercy - often ignored, spoken over.

It's an essential voice, but how can mercy be heard when ...

Here comes **truth**, and truth is saying

Clarity!

Acknowledgment!
Bring it all out in the open!
I want to know!
Because there is no freedom without the truth!
Who did it and when and why and with who? Who?!

And yet in this song, Mercy and truth are embracing. What on earth?
Mercy and truth in a hug? Is this possible?
Perhaps the child of mercy and truth is called forgiveness....

And here comes **justice** with her scales, calling out
Make it right, repair.
Make it right, repair.
For what you did
you will be held
to right account!
You will be held
accountable!
Violence has consequence!
Make it right, repair.

And here comes **Peace**,
looking for harmony, high notes and low, reaching for unity, offering well-being,
singing Ceasefire...Security... Respect for one and all...

But what type of peace is this, and is it a peace for all?
The prisons were emptied and the peace-walls didn't fall....
The guns were (mostly) decommissioned, but hair-trigger-hearts remained on duty....
And we need to review the state of our lives and the State we are in....

Because this song is a strange one: justice and peace are kissing, intimate.
Can justice really snog peace and live with that?

Mercy and Truth have met, embraced.
Justice and Peace have kissed.

Let all four voices get their turn to sing:
Mercy, raise your voice
Truth, be clear and multi-lingual
Justice, help us heal
Peace, remember all the pain.
Help us to
Remember.
Help us how to remember....and change.*

Paul Hutchinson

*original inspiration from John Paul Lederach (1999) and David Stevens (2004)