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The justice of God's kingdom

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This article explores the meaning of Jesus's teaching in Matthew 6:33 from a systematic-theological perspective to gauge its implications for Christian moral agency in contemporary South Africa. The research question is: 'What is the moral relevance of seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness in South Africa today – a society plagued by economic inequality, moral decay, corruption, and pockets of hedonism?' This question gives rise to the following sub-questions: Does Jesus teach us to withdraw from social challenges into an above-worldly sphere of pietism, seeking only a consoling spiritual relationship with God? Is the righteousness of the kingdom purely spiritual? Does it carry social implications? Can these implications be translated into social – even radical – social actions? How should Matthew 6:33 be understood and preached in present-day South Africa. The central-theoretical argument of the article is twofold: (1) the righteousness of the kingdom entails a sound relationship with God in Christ, which renews all other relationships of Christian believers; and (2) it requires their potent involvement in social justice. This research question and sub-questions will not be approached primarily from a biblical grammatical-historical perspective but rather from a systematic-theological perspective, with reference to biblical studies.

Contribution: Firstly, this appraisal revisits the concept of the kingdom of God and then focuses on the idea of God's righteousness and its social relevance, Christian moral agency, and an ecclesiology of justice. In conclusion, the discussion offers reflections on the relevance of Matthew 6:33 in the South African context today.

Keywords: Matthew 6:33; the righteousness of God's kingdom; the kingdom of God; ecclesiology of justice; social action; moral decay in South Africa; social calling of the church.

Introduction

It is indeed an honour and a pleasure to dedicate this research article to my colleague, Francois Viljoen, on the event of his retirement at the Faculty of Theology of the North-West University. This festschrift on the Sermon on the Mount aims to highlight his thorough and long involvement in Matthean research and its implications for our understanding of the Sermon, which some scholars regard as the constitution of the kingdom of God and the essence of kingdom ethics. Over the past five decades, many scholars – especially from within the Calvinist tradition – pointed to the importance of kingdom studies for understanding social ethics, the relationship between the church and state, human dignity and human rights, and the quest for Christian discipleship in the world (see for example Bright 1973:193; Moltmann 2012:19; Van Wyk 2015:216; Vorster 2015; Welker 2013:23). Van Wyk (2015:207) even pleads for the inclusion of a discipline called 'basileiology' in the encyclopaedia of theological academic research and teaching.

A holistic understanding of the kingdom of God is indeed a powerful paradigm for interpreting and applying the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. This article aims to reflect on the meaning of Jesus's instruction in Matthew 6:33 within the context of a congruent understanding of the biblical paradigm of the kingdom.[1] In doing so, I build on a line of reasoning developed in some of my previous research outputs regarding kingdom ethics.[2] On this foundation, I endeavour to present a novel point of view on the promise in Matthew 6:33, flowing from other contemporary research and contemplation.

1.In a previous publication, I discussed the idea of a *congruent understanding of Scripture* as a key element of classic reformed hermeneutics. One of the core ideas of the reformed confession concerning the authority of Scripture is that its revelation in Scripture is theologically congruent, irrespective of chronological and historical differences and apparent textual contradictions. This principle implies that grammatical analysis may be complemented by theological interpretation of Scripture (see Vorster 2020a:11). The 'part' (a passage in the biblical text) can thus be illuminated by the 'whole' (the congruent biblical theology). This principle has significant implications for the interpretive process and entails that Scripture interprets Scripture (*Scriptura Scripturae interpres*) (see Vorster 2020a:11). As a recurring theme throughout Scripture, the concept of the kingdom of God can be regarded as the backdrop for understanding all the parts of ethical understanding – in this case, the ethics reflected in Matthew 6:33.

2.See in this regard Vorster 2014, 2015, 2020a, 2020b and 2021 in the list of references.

Note: The manuscript is a contribution to the collection titled 'Francois P. Viljoen Festschrift', under the expert guidance of guest editor Prof. Albert Johannes Coetsee.

The research question is: What is the moral relevance of seeking 'his kingdom and his righteousness' in South Africa today – a society plagued by economic inequality, moral decay, corruption, and pockets of hedonism? The sub-questions that follow are: Should we withdraw from social problems into a transcendent pietism, seeking only a sound spiritual relationship with God? Is the righteousness of the kingdom merely spiritual? Does the righteousness of the kingdom have social implications? Can these implications be translated into social – even radical – social actions?[3] How should Matthew 6:33 be preached in South Africa today?

The central-theoretical argument of this article is that the righteousness of the kingdom firstly entails a sound relationship with God in Christ, which renews all other relationships of Christian believers. Furthermore, seeking the justice of the kingdom calls for a fervent involvement in social justice by the people of the kingdom. The research question and its sub-questions are addressed not primarily from a biblical grammatical-historical perspective but from a systematic-theological perspective, with reference to biblical studies. The article first revisits the concept of the kingdom of God, then explores the idea of God's righteousness and its social relevance and finally considers the moral agency of the church (his disciples) and its significance for the South African context today.

The theology of the kingdom

The theology of the kingdom of God has become a significant focus in contemporary reformed theological research in South Africa. This development is evident in numerous local publications in biblical studies, systematic theology, ethics, and ecclesiology over the past six decades.[4] This article proceeds from the kingdom paradigm as explained in my previous research (see Vorster 2015). As argued there, I regard the idea of the kingdom as one of the dominant themes in biblical revelation, essential for understanding God's justice and the moral agency of Christ's followers. For the novel argumentation in this present research, I repeat in the following reasoning the aspects of the reign of God that are of significance for understanding the assignment Jesus gives in Matthew 6:33.

3.These interpretive questions were particularly prominent in the South African context during the era of apartheid theology and the emergence of liberation theology. In the struggle against apartheid, successive forms of political and public theologies called for a prophetic theology of social justice – over and against both the state theology propagated by the churches of British colonialism and the narrow ecclesiology of the Afrikaans Calvinist churches, which either supported apartheid or treated it as a non-ecclesiastical affair. The influential and provocative *Kairos Document* (Institute of Contextual Theology 1985) described this context in detail, offering a critique of both apartheid theology and state theology, and called for a relevant and prophetic theological response. De Gruchy and De Gruchy (2005) offered seminal research on the role of churches in the socio-political struggles of South Africa's colonial history.

4.Early 20th-century Dutch theologians, Kuyper and Bavinck, and the Calvinist philosophy laid the initial foundations of kingdom theology in the reformed tradition. This line of thinking eventually influenced Christian reformed thinking in the United States and other parts of the world (see e.g. Beasley-Murray 1987; Bright 1973). The interest in research on the concept of God's kingdom in the South African theological discourse was inspired by the well-known publication of the Dutch New Testament scholar, Ridderbos (1950; also cf. Vorster 2015). Two other publications applied and furthered his research in South Africa. These are Van der Walt (1962) and Du Toit (1969; also cf. Vorster 2015). Heyns (1977) also developed his influential ecclesiology within the framework of this paradigm and Van Wyk (2015) based his extensive studies in theological ethics on this idea. Spoelstra (1989) explains the principles and practical application of reformed polity within the context of the idea of the kingdom.

Although the expression 'kingdom of God' does not occur in the Old Testament, its substance is clearly visible, particularly in relation to God's reign and the law (Bright 1973:191–193). The idea of the kingdom shines through in the Old Testament with the continuous proclamation of God's reign within the context of a covenant and in his promise to renew creation through redemption and regeneration by his Servant and the application thereof by the Holy Spirit (ed. Du Toit 1969:11–13; Vriezen 1966:146; Welker 2013:211). The New Testament proclaims the reign of God as it becomes manifest in the coming of Christ, the cross, his resurrection and ascension, Pentecost, and the formation of God's people called from all nations (Beasley-Murray 1987:20; Guthrie 1981:419; Ridderbos 1962:47; Van der Walt 1962:32; Vorster 2015). While the New Testament uses different expressions to describe the kingdom of God, all point to the reign of the triune God, the calling of God's people, and the renewal of creation.

The concept of the kingdom in the biblical revelation includes the fact that the kingdom is both a present and future reality – present reality due to the cross of Christ, and future reality due to the promise of its final vindication with Christ's second coming. Küng (1992:56) refers to this as a 'presentist-futurist eschatology'. This reign of God has already commenced with the coming, life, suffering, death on the cross, and resurrection of Christ but will only be revealed in its fullness in the new heaven and earth. This concept furthers the idea of the Old Testament theology of the kingdom and resonates with the biblical history of the covenant as a kingdom-covenant, portraying God's communion with his chosen people through law, offerings, liturgical conduct, and feasts. God's covenantal communion with his people portrays a historic kingdom, distinguished by a unique culture unlike the kingdoms and cultures of the surrounding nations. The kingdom of God is indeed a historical reality for God's people in both the old and new dispensations.

Some of Jesus' teaching presents the kingdom as both a present reality and a future reality. It is at the same time a reality and a promise. However, these expressions are not contradictory. Conzelmann (1976:114) argues persuasively that both perspectives are of equal significance for human existence (Vorster 2015). Ladd (1961:25), Moltmann (1965:22), and Welker (2013:209) likewise argue that the reign of God is already present but will be fully revealed in the future aeon, and that these perspectives should not be interpreted as two contradictory worldviews but rather as two sides of the same coin. This presentist-futurist reality of the kingdom is an essential component of a correct understanding of the justice of the kingdom. Regarding the future *reality* of the kingdom, the justice of the kingdom firstly entails a renewed relationship with God that bears eschatological consequences. This justice is founded upon redemption in Christ and the fulfilment of the Holy Spirit, resulting in faith as an expression of free divine grace. Welker (2013:209) deals with this issue in depth, showing that through Jesus Christ and the power of the divine Spirit, God's reign reveals the loving, preserving, salvific, and uplifting activity of the Creator and the triune

God (Vorster 2015). Welker understands God's revelation in Christ and in the power of the Spirit from the perspective of 'Creation' and 'Creator', emphasising that the resurrected and exalted Christ is not present apart from the Holy Spirit. It is then through the divine Spirit that Christ includes his witness in the post-Easter life (Vorster 2015). Considering Welker's viewpoint, it may be concluded that the future promise of the kingdom infuses justification with a profoundly spiritual dimension, constituting the hope of the complete renewal of creation according to God's promises throughout history.

Regarding the present reality of the kingdom, God's reign finds concrete expression in the coming and teaching of Christ. Moltmann (2012:37) maintains that God's present reign breaks into the real world and especially into its afflictions. In his view, the salvation of the kingdom is, because of the *presentist* reign of God, socially transformative, and takes effect in the struggle for human dignity across all spheres of social life. He refers to economic justice, solidarity with the marginalised people, ecological justice, and the struggle for hope amid personal despair. Hope is not merely a vision of the future but something to be realised in the lived experience of people, especially those in need and social distress. In this respect, Welker (2013:209) also offers significant insight, arguing that justice in this present age may be founded on the threefold *gestalt* of the reign of Christ as king, prophet, and priest. This threefold *gestalt* generates the present power of the Spirit, the historic formation of the church, and real, relevant Christian action in public life. It thereby establishes Christ's organic reign in concrete and realistic terms within the public domain (Welker 2013:247). The threefold office also inaugurates the threefold office of Christians in the world, inspiring their agency for justice amid all forms of social despair.

The kingdom is thus a reign with an exceptional law, morality, and quality of life. Its law is 'written' on the heart of every human being. The kingdom's distinctive moral character arises from this engraved law and establishes humans as agents with a moral conscience and an innate ability to recognise the common good. Calvin (2008 – *Inst*. 2.7.1) acknowledged the reality of the moral conscience given to all people as a manifestation of God's general goodness. It may be described as moral or natural law (Vorster 2015). Witte (2007) summarises Calvin's various terms for natural law as follows (see also the works of Grabill 2006 and VanDrunen 2010, 2014):

> Calvin used a variety of terms to describe this moral law such as: 'the voice of nature'; 'the engraved law'; 'the law of nature'; 'the natural law'; 'the inner mind'; 'the rule of equity'; 'the natural sense'; 'the sense of divine judgement'; 'the testimony of the heart'; 'the inner voice' amongst other terms. (p. 59)

The concept of the engraved (natural) law became notorious in the post-Reformation era and became fundamental to the reformed concept of moral conscience and humanity's moral agency in pursuit of the common good.

The moral character of the kingdom can be summarised in the words of the great commandment and its many explanations and applications in the apostolic writings. It is a kingdom defined by an ethos of love in the fullest sense of the word such as, among others, a diamond with many facets, love for God and fellow human beings, reconciliation, justice, the transformation of discriminatory societies, the upliftment of the poor and destitute, hope, and peace. Hauerwas (1983) calls it a peaceable kingdom. God's reign manifests where love overcomes hatred and malice, and where reconciliation occurs despite the various social divisions born from human inclination to discriminate. Love, peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, and stewardship are the hallmarks to be pursued by the people of the kingdom. Significant in the fulfilment of the present reign of God according to the threefold office of Christ and the concrete pursuit of justice is the establishment of the church as, among others, an exemplary and vocal agent of justice. However, before elucidated this topic, certain observations on the justice referenced in Matthew 6:33 are required.

Justice in the Sermon on the Mount

A survey of commentaries on the meaning of Matthew 6:33 reveals a broad consensus among biblical commentators in the popular domain that the text primarily refers to the comfort and richness of a sound spiritual relationship with God (see Biblehub 2025). In contrast to the anxiety of daily survival, people are called to place their trust in a sound relationship with God within the sphere of his kingdom, grounded on the gift of justification. In the words of the classic interpretation by Gill (2025), this entails, inter alia, that the promises of the gospel, and its ministration:

> […] be sought after, and into; to be constantly attended on, and to be preferred to our necessary food, to raiment, or riches, or any enjoyment of life: or else the kingdom of glory, which is prepared by God, and is his gift; for which he makes his people meet here, and will introduce them into it hereafter. (n.p.)

This historical exposition reflects the view of popular commentators on Biblehub, who claim that the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel is what grants a right and title to the kingdom of heaven (also see Grosheide 1954:109–110). According to Gill (2025):

> […] this is not the righteousness of man, but of God; and is no other than the righteousness of Christ; so called, because he is God who has wrought it; it is what God approves of, accepts, and imputes, and which only can justify in his sight, and give an abundant entrance into his kingdom and glory. Heaven is to be sought for in the first place, as the perfection of the saints' happiness; and Christ's righteousness is to be sought for, and laid hold on by faith, as the way and means of enjoying that happiness; without which, there will be no entering into the kingdom of heaven. (n.p.)

This classic view reverberates in popular commentaries and boils down to the idea that seeking the kingdom means 'to seek heaven' and its associated spiritual blessings. Over and against this classic and traditional view echoing in

contemporary understandings of this teaching of Jesus, one could argue that the pericope of Matthew 6:25–34 also addresses gifts and solace in a concrete sense. Consider the following reasoning: The teaching in Matthew 6:33 contains two imperatives and a promise all set within the context of kingdom theology. There are three imperatives, namely (1) 'Do not worry'; (2) 'Seeking the kingdom'; and (3) 'all other things will be given to you'. Various commentators, such as those cited above, do justice to the first imperative of the pericope by rightly claiming that Jesus calls his followers to avoid being engulfed by daily concerns, which can overwhelm their entire existence. Yet the second imperative – to seek the kingdom of God – and the associated promise have a much broader and deeper significance than merely the spiritual relationship with God, gospel ministry, and a life of serenity and comfort. The pericope of Matthew 6:25–34 focuses on two focal points: comfort in the face of material need, and the command to seek the justice of God from the perspective of his justice and reign in the present and coming kingdom.

The classic work of the Dutch New Testament scholar, Ridderbos (1969:285), on the righteousness of the coming kingdom, echoes the all-encompassing meaning of the second imperative captured in Matthew 6:33. Referring to all the other assertions of Jesus about the righteousness of the kingdom and its implications for his followers' lives, Ridderbos rejects the idea that this pericope indicates an 'interim ethic' or 'eschatological ethics' in view of an imminent expectation of the kingdom. He maintains that the call to righteousness is just as enduring as the commandment to love (Mt 7:12; 22:34–40; Mk 12:28–31; cf. Lk 10:27–28; Mk 12:32–34), which Jesus identifies as the essence of the kingdom not only in eschatological terms but for all time as a fundamental commandment for human living. 'The norms of the righteousness demanded by Jesus are not founded in an earthly ideal of God's kingdom, nor in the future and transcendent character of the kingdom' (Ridderbos 1969:290). It is to be rooted in the fulfilment of the law through his messianic and substitutionary work, including his suffering and death. Jesus fulfilled the law and enables his followers to observe it, thereby entering the kingdom. Therefore, kingdom ethics is neither an interim ethics nor ethics of appeasement but a total restructuring of life within the ambit of the authenticity of the coming and present reality of the kingdom.

To seek the kingdom is to pursue its culture (law, ethos, morality). It is not merely an act of faith, but an all-encompassing moral act. Both the imperatives and the promise in Matthew 6:25–34 deal with real-life concerns and shape the intentions, ideals, expectations, planning, and calling of Jesus' followers. Seeking the kingdom is the moral compass for Christians, guiding them under the comforting reign of God to become moral agents of love, peace, and justice – also social justice – and political liberation.

But one last question remains: How will 'all these things be given to you'? If seeking the kingdom is a robust moral act, will the promise only entail limited spiritual comfort? How will God, as the sole provider of all good things in human life, provide for the daily needs of the people of the kingdom?

I venture an answer: God calls, inspires, and equips his people to care for each other as the execution of their command to seek firstly the kingdom of God. 'All these things' will be given to them by God through the mutual generosity of fellow Christians in their intention to live by the great commandment of love and act as agents of justice. This answer brings to the fore the role and calling of the church within the context of the kingdom.[5]

The agents of justice

In previously published research on the Beatitude expressed in Luke 6:20, I offered a perspective on the blessing extended to the poor (see Vorster 2020b). A concise summary of the main findings of that research may be highlighted in the following statements:

- The blessing of the poor lies in their inclusion within the new community fashioned by the presentist kingdom of God. This new community is marked by care and love, which hold the love of Christ in high esteem (Mt 24–25; Mk 13). They are the righteous, and the manifestation of their righteousness is found, inter alia, in their care for the poor and the downtrodden. In Acts 20:35, the apostle reiterates this theme, drawing on the Hellenistic understanding of the concept of love which entails that love is to see to the well-being of others (De Heer 2006:90). This teaching of Jesus furthermore represents a radical application of the Torah (Bammel 1968:889; De Vaux 1988:72). Caring for the poor implies social justice and the struggle against all forms of injustice (see Matz 2017:40). The aim of the social teaching of Jesus and his followers is to redress the injustices arising from the stratified social systems of Jewish and Roman society.
- The new community that emerges in the *Zwischenraum* – the space between the present realisation of the kingdom and its future consummation – is the church comprising both the global body of Jesus's followers and every local congregation (Heyns 1977:23; Küng 1992:224; Lindijer 1962:54; Snyman 1977:25). Believers are to be agents of justice. As moral agents, they are called to promote human dignity, peace, fairness, and to act as the conscience of the state and other role-players when it comes to the blessing of the poor in real terms (see Bonhoeffer 1995:61; Harvie 2009:31; Stackhouse 1995:26).

In summary: The kingdom is a kingdom of justice, and the new relationship established through the atoning and reconciling work of Christ includes the formation of a new community – the church. The church, in all its features, is both a sign of the presentist kingdom and a herald of justice and peace. In fulfilling its calling and vocation as king, prophet, and priest, the church must continually act on behalf

5.I dealt with the concept of the church and its calling against the background of the presentist-futurist reality of the kingdom of God in various publications. This presentation reflects aspects of the research done, but the findings are applied afresh to the question at hand. To read more about the opinions expressed in the other publications, see Vorster (2014, 2015, 2021:121–136).

of the poor and the oppressed. The church, as the people of God's kingdom, is his agent of justice among the nations.

Effectuating the justice of the kingdom: An ecclesiology of justice

The agency of the kingdom's justice must be embedded in an applicable and functional ecclesiology to fully accommodate the richness of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:33. Neo-Calvinism has offered such a functional ecclesiology, distinguishing between the church as *organism* and the church as *institute* (Kuyper 1909:204). The institute refers to the organised church functioning within the ambit of church polity. Its primary calling as institute is the ministry of the Word and the sacraments and nothing more. In this capacity, the institutional church functions as a sovereign civil society among other social institutions. According to Kuyper, the church is also an organism. This term portrays the presence of Christians within every sphere of civil life. The organism functions in all societal spheres and is destined to proclaim the overarching reign of Christ and to uphold the justice and morality of the kingdom across all civil spheres. This Kuyperian ecclesiology was further developed in the social teachings of the Christian philosophy of Dooyeweerd (1933:481).

In South Africa, alternative ecclesiological perspectives emerged from the churches' struggle for a just post-apartheid dispensation. In this respect, the views of Barth, Moltmann, Hauerwas, and Bosch became prominent. The Barthian tradition maintained that the relationship between church and society is only analogical and passive (Barth 1946:33). According to this view, the light of Christ's reign first falls upon the institutional church, and the church, in turn, reflects this light to the state through the preaching of the Word. The state is thus expected to find in the church a model of justice and peace. From a different angle of approach, Hauerwas (1981:72, 1983:99) promotes a similar pacifist ecclesiology with his well-known dictum that the church does not have a social ethic but is a social ethic. The church should radiate the principles of Christian morality to society by way of its own exemplary moral stance. Rather than telling an alternative story, the church *is* the alternative story to be told (Hauerwas 2001:150). Bosch (1991:172), following this line of thought, describes the church as an alternative community that sets the example for society through its love, harmony, peace, transformation, and reconciliation (Vorster 2015). These perspectives boil down to a pacifist ecclesiology and it could be argued that these were co-responsible for the quietist approach of the Reformed churches in the quest for a democratic South Africa. Moltmann's ecclesiology (2012:40) is more formative. He defines the Christian community as an active moral agent that should address the plight of the suffering in an active way and not being merely an example of justice. These views present valuable insights from different theological paradigms. The question, however, remains: How could these views be converted into a viable and workable plan to effectuate the role of Christians in the active promotion justice of the kingdom? What could ecclesiology of justice entail?

Building on the insights mentioned above, I have elsewhere proposed a model that employs the metaphor of the instituted church as an '*electric power* plant' (see Vorster 2015:4). This metaphor can also be applied to the question under discussion. It was originally introduced by Duvenage (1970:206) in his thesis about the relationship between church and nation in South Africa. His application of the metaphor can be extended in view of the core elements of the ecclesiology of neo-Calvinism but also those of Barth, Moltmann, Hauerwas, and Bosch. As Hauerwas posits, the institutional church is indeed an exemplary community. Every local congregation should function as a moral agent by modelling a reconciled, loving, and peace-seeking community. People should encounter in the local congregation a model of a loving, fair, just community with a sound morality. Furthermore, the church is called to be an agent of justice by testifying to the noble principles of the kingdom. In this capacity, the institutional church functions like an electric power plant, generating the energy for social action. The life of the church – its worship, preaching, diaconate, and prophetic witness – must be focused toward forming the awareness, values, knowledge, willingness, and abilities of individual Christians (Vorster 2015).

However, this metaphor goes further: An electric power plant generates energy, yet that energy must be transmitted via electric cables to reach the wider region. The church is the power plant, and individual Christians are the 'cables of transmission'. They are the agents of justice, equipped by the endeavours of the instituted church through its liturgy, message, and communion. These agents could function as the 'transmission cables' that bring the light and energy of justice and love to the marginalised in society. The energy is generated by the church through worship, and the ministry of this 'power plant' should then transmit this energy to society by way of active social action featuring the moral principles flowing from Christ's reign. The instituted church must be an empowering community that equips and trains Christians to seek and promote justice in all spheres of society (Vorster 2015).

This active pursuit of social justice in all spheres of life brings comfort and hope to people weighed down by worry and distress. In summary: The church is both agent and witness to the social implications of God's reign. It must set a high moral example, testify to the moral implications of Christ's reign, and serve as a community in which Christians are equipped to function as justice-seeking and comforting agents in society (Vorster 2015). As such, the church is indeed God's gift to a troubled world.

Conclusion: Matthew 6:33 for South Africa today

The attempt to consider the relevance of Jesus's teaching in Matthew 6:33 for justice and moral agency in contemporary South Africa, centres around three focal points, which may be summarised as follows:

- Despite the advent of full democracy in 1994, South African society could be regarded as troubled, unhappy, and anxious. The psychopathology of colonialised racism, as identified by Fanon (2004:235), continues to scar the face of society. The slowing momentum of the reconciliation project initiated with vigour by President Mandela, along with high levels of violent crime, corruption, on-going inequalities, and ineffective political leadership at multiple levels, undermines the well-being and happiness of large segments of the population. South Africa is indeed a troubled nation in desperate need of hope and happiness.
- While churches were vigorous in the quest for change in the country in the era of oppression, the prophetic voice of the church has grown faint in the post-apartheid dispensation. Olivier (2011:66–70) even accuses the church of being part of some of the problems ravaging society. Today, the silence of churches on issues of social justice appears to be fuelled by political compromise with ruling elites or charismatic pietist spiritualities, immersion in prosperity theology, and distraction by internal theological controversies.
- The preaching of Matthew 6:25–34 in contemporary South Africa first and foremost requires a reinvigoration of the prophetic church and the social vocation of Christian believers. The prophetic conscience of Christians in all spheres of society must focus anew on the socio-economic and political implications of the justice of the kingdom. In doing so, Christianity can offer renewed solace and hope for this troubled and disillusioned nation. To seek the kingdom is to live with hope in the promise of its future fulfilment – and to embody the justice of that kingdom here and now.

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