

# Poverty

1. It was recognised that poverty can be the result of lack of diligence

‘Laziness causes poverty,

Diligence makes a person rich’(Proverbs 10:4).

‘Poverty and disgrace are for the one who ignores instruction’(Proverbs 13:8).

‘Hard work leads to profit.

Mere talk leads only to poverty’(Proverbs 14:23).

‘The lazy person does not plough in season;

harvest comes, and there is nothing to be found’(Proverbs 20:4).

‘Precious treasure remains in the house of the wise,

but the fool devours it’(Proverbs 21:20).

## 2. Poverty can also be the result of oppression

‘Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker.

Those who are kind to the needy honour him’(Proverbs 14:31).

### Job 24:2-6

‘The wicked remove landmarks; they seize flocks and pasture them.

They drive away the donkey of the orphan;

they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.

They thrust the needy off the road;

the poor of the earth all hide themselves.

Like wild asses in the desert they go out to their toil,

scavenging in the wasteland food for their young.

They reap in a field not their own

and they glean in the vineyard of the wicked.’

Job 24:7-11, 14

‘The poor lie all night naked, without clothing,  
and have no covering in the cold.

They are wet with the rain of the mountains,  
and cling to the rock for want of shelter.

There are those who snatch the orphan child from the breast,  
and take as a pledge the infant of the poor.

They go about naked, without clothing.

Though hungry, they carry the sheaves.

Between their terraces they press out oil;

they tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst.

The murderer rises at dusk to kill the poor and needy.’

## Amos 2:6-7

In Israel they sell the **just** person for silver, and the **needy** for a pair of sandals. They trample the heads of the **powerless** into the dust of the earth, and push the **oppressed** out of the way.

The **needy** ('ebyôn): the beggar, powerless, last-in-the-line, without-a-voice.

The small upper class who are profiting from the wealth pouring in through commerce are walking all over the rest of the population, the **powerless** (dallîm).

The **oppressed** ('anāwîm): stooped, marginalised, trodden down, deserted, deprived, outcast, despised, cast-aside, humiliated, roughly-treated, burdened, yoked, trapped, caught, crushed by the blows of chronic misery.

The Torah (Exodus 22:21-26) forbids reducing people to destitution

‘You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans. If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. If you take your neighbour’s cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down.’

## Amos 5:14-15

‘Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so YHWH, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you claim. Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that YHWH, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.’

## Amos 5:21-25

I hate, I loathe your festivals,  
I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.  
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings,  
I will not accept them;  
and the communion offerings of your fatted animals  
I will not look upon favourably.  
Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.  
But let right judgment roll down like waters,  
and justice like an ever flowing stream.  
Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings  
the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

## Amos 8:4-7

Hear this, you that trample on the **needy** (2:6),  
and bring to ruin the **afflicted** (2:7) of the land, saying,  
“When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain;  
and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale?  
We will make the ephah (40 litres) small and the shekel (11 grams) great,  
and practice deceit with false balances,  
buying the **powerless** (2:7) for silver and the **needy** for a pair of sandals,  
and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”  
YHWH has sworn by the Glory of Jacob:  
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

3. Because of YHWH's faithfulness the poor looked to YHWH to  
'rescue them from their oppressors'(Jeremiah 20:13).

Psalm 12:5-6

'Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan,  
I will now rise up, says YHWH;  
I will place them in the safety for which they long.'  
'The promises of YHWH are promises that are pure.'

Psalm 40:11-12

'YHWH, do not withhold your mercy from me;  
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.  
For evils have encompassed me without number;  
my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see;  
they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me'

Psalm 74:21-22

‘Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame;  
let the poor and needy praise your name.  
Rise up, O God, plead your cause;  
remember how the impious scoff at you all day long.’

## Psalm 69: A cry of the 'poor'

The life of the psalmist is under threat because of the stand he is taking in obedience to God's will. He pleads for God's help, trusting that in God's good time it will be forthcoming, for he believes that 'YHWH hears the needy and does not despise his own that are in bonds'(verse 33).

### Psalm 69:1-3

'Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.  
I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold.  
I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.  
I am weary with my crying; my throat is hoarse.  
My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. '

## Psalm 69:4

‘More in number than the hairs of my head  
are those who hate me without cause;  
stronger than my bones are my enemies who speak lies about me.

## Psalm 69:7-9

‘It is in your cause that I have borne reproach,  
that shame has covered my face.  
I have become a stranger to my family, alien to my mother’s children.  
It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; (see John 2:17)  
the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. (see Romans 15:3)

## Psalm 69:13-17

‘My prayer is to you, YHWH.

At an acceptable time, O God,  
in the abundance of your kindness,  
answer me with your faithfulness which saves.

Rescue me from sinking in the mire;  
let me be delivered from my enemies.

Do not let the flood sweep over me.

Do not let the deep swallow me up,  
or the Pit close its mouth over me.

Answer me, YHWH, for your kindness is good;  
according to your tender compassion turn to me.

Do not hide your face from your servant,  
for I am in distress – make haste to answer me.

## Psalm 69:18-21

Come close. I long for you. Redeem me. Free me from my enemies.

You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonour.

My foes are all known to you.

Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair.

I looked for pity, but there was none;

and for comforters, but I found none.

They gave me poison for food,

and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. (see Matthew 27:34)

## Psalm 69:29-34

‘I am lowly and in pain. Let your salvation, O God, protect me.

I will praise the name of God with a song;

I will acknowledge his greatness with thanksgiving ...

Let the oppressed see it and be glad.

You who seek God, let your hearts revive, for YHWH hears the needy.

He does not despise his own that are in bonds.

Let heaven and earth praise him,

the seas and everything that moves in them.

It was the role of the king to be YHWH's instrument  
in rescuing the needy:

Psalm 72:1-2

*'Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to a king's son.  
May he judge your people with righteousness,  
and your needy ones with justice.'*



## Remember

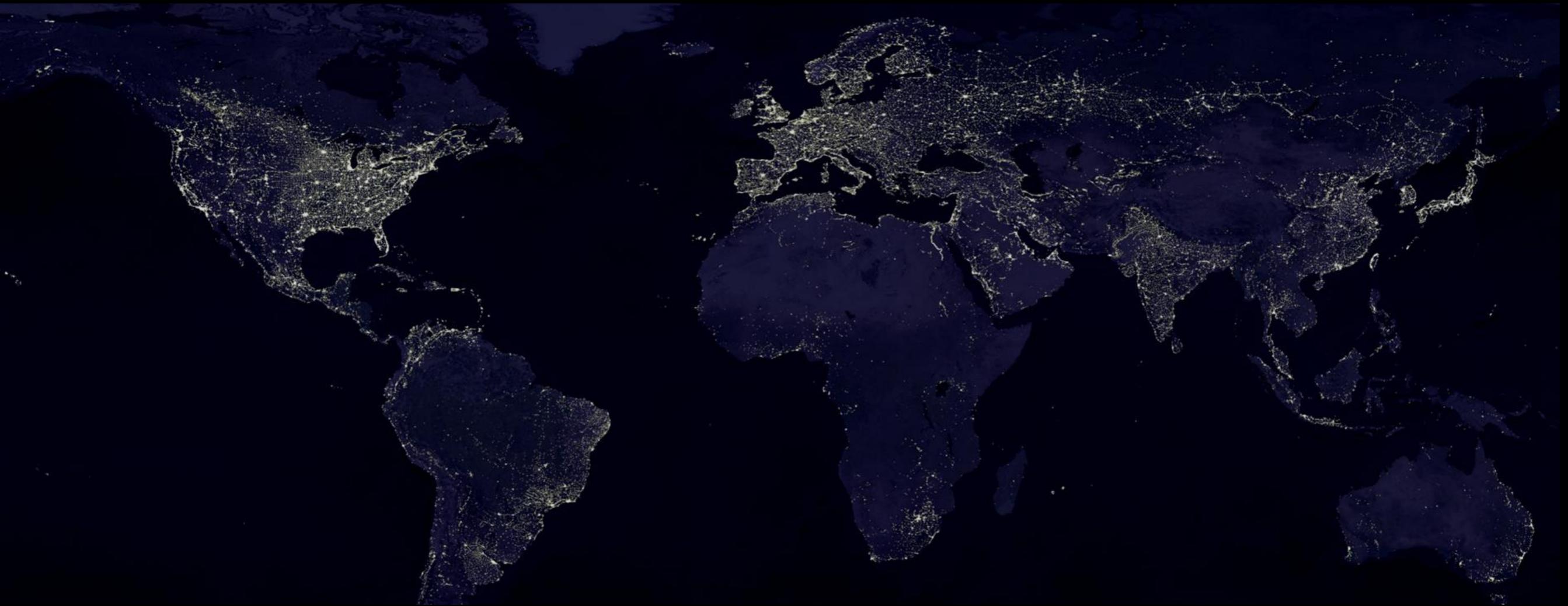
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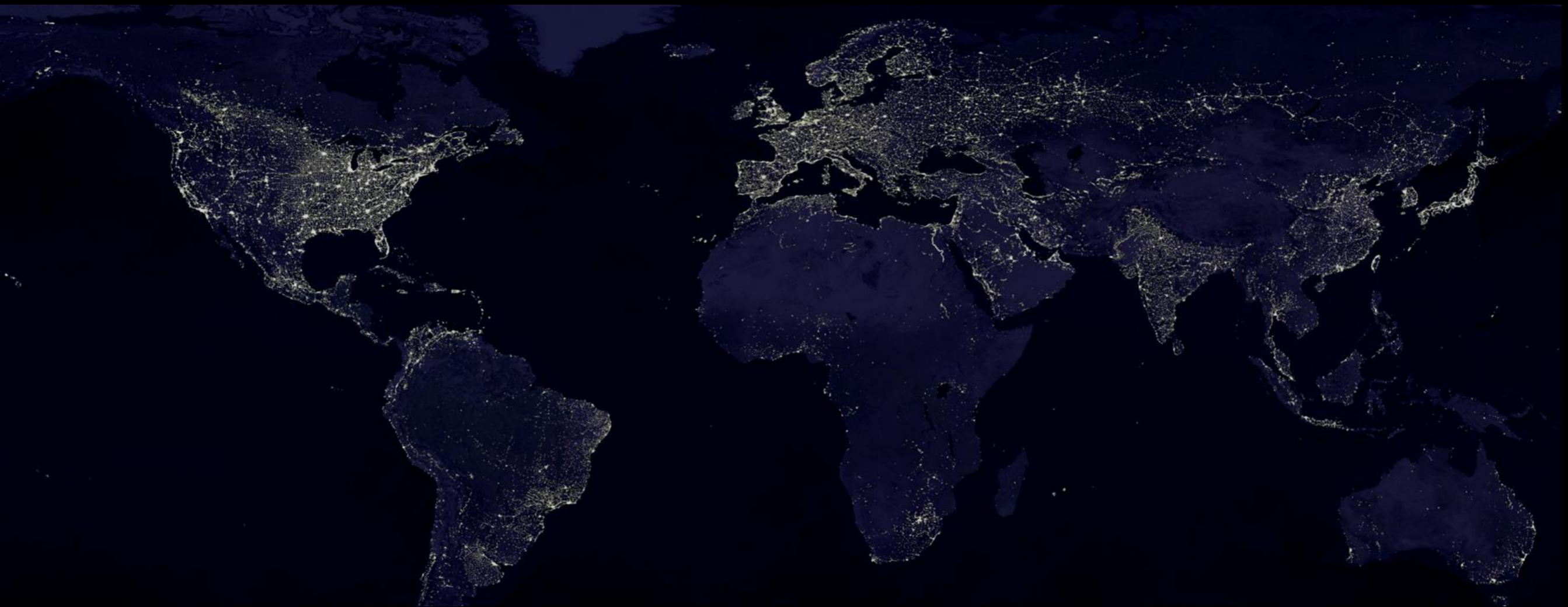
The voice of fear echoes deep,  
fragile trust is soon betrayed.  
The stranger becomes enemy.  
Tender hearts are turned to stone.



But there is a hunger in our time  
for these broken bonds to be restored,  
to bring compassion to our world,  
to understand the truth about us all:  
that deeper we are one, our tears are still the same.



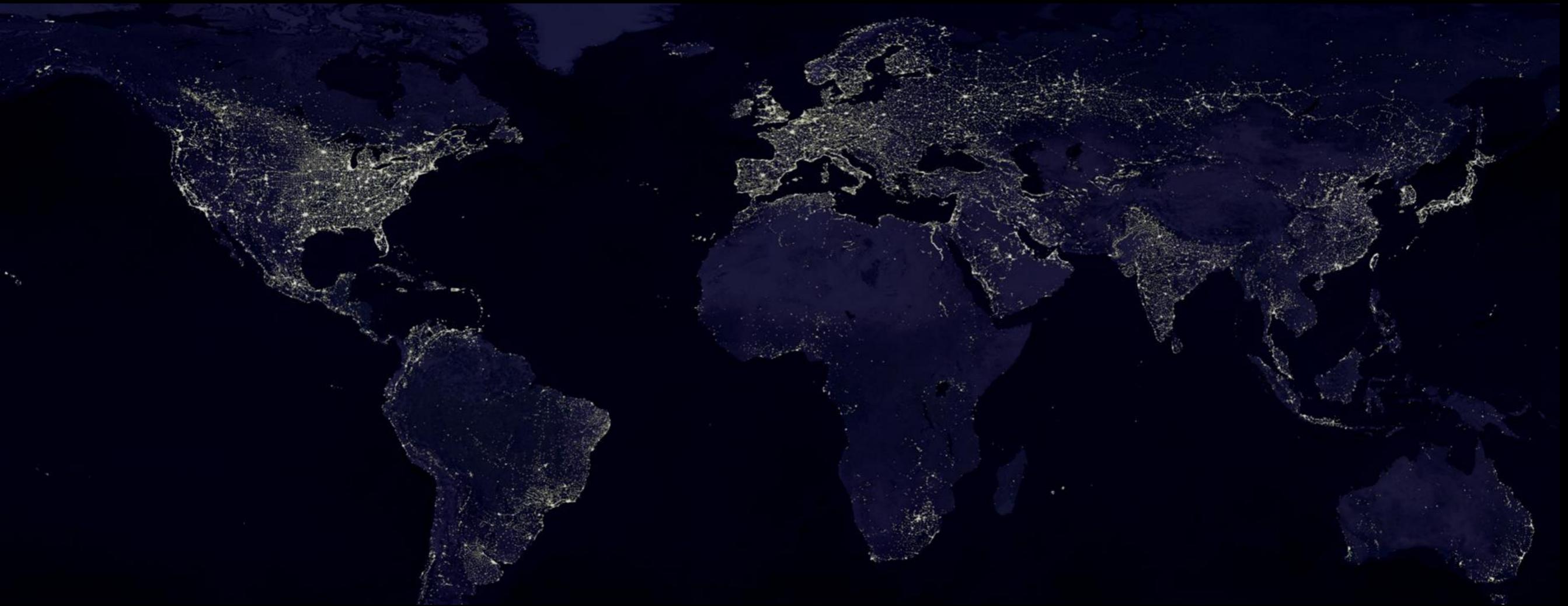
Remember that justice cannot grow in fear.  
that peace relies on open hearts.  
that we are not living separate lives.  
the only hope we have is love.



There is a silence across the lands.  
Too many stories stay untold.  
It seems beyond our strength to care.  
It's easier if we don't know.



But justice is born in journeys shared,  
and we must live the peace we long to see.  
There can be no peace without truth.  
Only the truth will make us free,  
'cause deeper we are one, our tears are all the same.



Remember that justice cannot grow in fear.  
that peace relies on open hearts.  
that we are not living separate lives.  
the only hope we have is love. (2)