

## Further Reflection

*We need to recapture the gospel glow of the early Christians, who were non-conformists in the truest sense of the word and refused to shape their witness according to the mundane patterns of the world. Willingly they sacrificed fame, fortune, and life itself, on behalf of a cause they knew to be right. Quantitatively small, they were qualitatively giants.*

Martin Luther King, Strength to Love

How can we *recapture that glow*?

*God's concerns are all embracing - not only the 'sacred' but the secular, not only religion but nature, not only his covenant people but all people, not only justification but social justice in every community, not only his gospel but his law. So we must not attempt to narrow down his interests, Moreover, ours should be as broad as his.*

John Stott, Issues Facing Christians Today

In what way can you *broaden your interests* to better match God's concerns?



Sermon Series: 5 November - 17 December 2023

## **Study 3: Justice and Jesus in the New Testament**

A study in parallel with the sermon on 19 November

### Getting Started

Here's a multiple choice question to get underway...

Social Justice is ...

- a. a hinderance to evangelism
- b. a bridge to evangelism
- c. a partner to evangelism
- d. none of the above
- e. all of the above
- f. something else....

What did you answer and why?

### Jesus and Justice

Ron Sider in his book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* says, 'The poor are the only group specifically singled out as recipients of Jesus' gospel. Certainly the gospel he proclaimed was for all, but he was particularly concerned that the poor realise that his good news was for them.'

Do you think that is the case?

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The origin of this series of sermons and studies is Steve's reading of Tim Keller's book, "**Generous Justice** - How God's Grace Makes Us Just".



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Read Luke's gospel to see how he emphasises Jesus' concern for justice for the marginalised of society, for social reversal and economic justice.

Here are some of the key verses. You won't have time to discuss them all, but try to read all of them to feel the weight of Jesus' concern for justice for the marginalised. Take time to discuss at least a few of them and how they might apply to us.

- 1:53 Mary's song whilst pregnant with Jesus.
- 3:11, 14 John the Baptist, preparing the way.
- 4:18 Jesus announcing his ministry, quoting from Isaiah. (See also 7:22)
- 4:24-27 Jesus reflects on OT times.
- 5:12-13 Lepers were literally on the edge of society.
- 6:20, 24 The Sermon on the Mount.
- 6:32-36 ... be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.
- 7:11-15 How does this miracle provide for a marginalised person?
- 7:36-50 Jesus shows great love to a social outcast.
- 8:1-3 Note the prominent place of women in Jesus' wider group of disciples.
- 8:43-48 Gracious care for the ostracised.
- 12:16-21 A well-known parable.
- 12:33 A challenging saying of Jesus.
- 14:12-14 And another one.
- 14:33 And another one!
- 16:13 And... you guessed it.
- 16:19-26 Another parable.
- 18:15-17 Back then society was not child-centric.
- 18:18-22 And another challenge.
- 20:46-47 A warning.

## Justice in the Early Church

Read Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35.

How does Acts 4:34a compare with Deuteronomy 15:4, 7, 11 (which we looked at in Study 2)? What does that tell us about this new covenant, Spirit-filled community?

Read Acts 6:1-7.

Which marginalised group is the focus here?

These passages (and others) make it clear that we are to work for justice inside the believing community of God's People. The same is true in the Old Testament where the social legislation care for the marginalised is largely focussed inward.

However, in the New Testament (as with the Old), it is 'clear that *our* practical love, *our* generous justice is not be confined to only those who believe as we do.' (Keller, p61)

Read Galatians 6:10.

How far is our help to extend?

What does that (should that) look like for you as an individual and for us collectively as church?

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and 1 John 3:16-18.

What is the practical expression of these instructions for those of us who are rich and seek to live justly?