



**Series: "God's justice in a hurting world!"**

(Tim Keller: "*Generous Justice*") #1 "What is God's Justice?"

*Isaiah 42:1-7, Matthew 12:15-21,  
8am James 2:12-18*

A few editorial comments as we start this new series.

In each of our lives the balances, the changes, and the challenges within Christian living puts Biblical Justice to the test.

The origin for this series (for me) came from living and serving in Hong Kong prior to KAC fifteen years ago. Tim Keller, the well-known author and speaker, visited our Churches in Hong Kong and spoke to us in this regard. Shortly after arriving in KAC, approximately two years after that conversation with Tim Keller, this book arrived.

"Generous Justice" 2010 acted as a challenge and so formed my thinking. This was followed by a number of us at KAC going on Mission to serve at "Cross Roads" in Hong Kong. Their purpose is gospel-focused and justice-driven to facilitate the implementation of a programme where shipping containers filled with used resources were delivered around the world.

The grander scale of the Operational Christmas Child and the upcoming Berkeley Hampers.

But scale and size do not matter. It is about a generous heart that seeks to honour God.

**The God of Justice**

Justice starts with the character of God. God is just. He defines and sets the standard for justice. The series will take us to Jesus' birth at Christmas. Like His Father, Jesus pursued justice. He physically and spiritually rescued those in need.

God introduces Himself as a God of incredible power. Listen to Isaiah 42:5 *"This is what God the LORD says— the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it".*

Deuteronomy 10 says, *"To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. ... He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing."*

Our all-powerful God chooses to use His power to care for the most needy and vulnerable people in society.

Over and over in the Bible, God introduces Himself and says **I am the Father of the fatherless, the defender of the defenceless.**

Isn't an introduction a precis of what we do?

I am Steve, I am a minister at Kiama Anglican Church.

God says, I am the all-powerful God, and my heart is for the vulnerable. He is sharing that this is at the heart of who He is.

As we read the Bible, it is important we shake our mind free of human and political agendas. The Bible does not fit in with liberal or conservative stances. We should not be reading the Bible

through these kinds of lenses. We need to be open to listen to what God is saying, not anyone else.

Tim Keller said, "Contemporary people tend to examine the Bible, looking for things they can accept; but Christians should reverse that, allowing the Bible to examine us, looking for things that God can't accept."

So, a series on Biblical justice is not a "liberal" stand. Nor am I "laboring" a point. We are understanding the character of God. Caring for the poor is not just good ethics, it is good theology.

We care about the poor, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because we are called to reflect the character of God. God is a God of justice.

Biblical Justice is not a set of bullet/dot points or a set of rules and guidelines.... If only! It is grounded in the very character of God, and it is the outworking of His character, which is always seeking after what is just.

There is no perfect or easy definition for Biblical Justice. Tim Keller says **"Biblical justice requires that every person be treated according to the same standards and with the same respect, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, or of any other social category."**

As a society, this is a concept we struggle with, have clearly struggled with in our past and will continue to do so until Jesus returns. This sermon series is a call to be agents of change; to live God's justice in a hurting world.

### The call for a Life of Justice

The word "justice" appears 200 times in the Bible. It is translated in many different ways. Sometimes it is translated, 'uphold the cause'. Sometimes it is translated 'righteous' and sometimes it is translated 'justice'.

If this term is referred to 200 times in the Bible, it must be important. God's justice is both retributive and restorative.

God stands against wrong. He says, He will judge all evil doing. When people are doing wrong, we have to stop them. We have to speak up. To do justice is to stop injustice.

But justice has another side. Justice is to give the weak, the oppressed and the vulnerable, honour. Justice is to show God's grace and mercy. Proverbs 31:9 says, "Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

There are four aspects of Biblical justice. Biblical justice is characterised by:

- equality for all people,
- unmeasured generosity,
- compassionate advocacy and
- merciful responsibility.

Leviticus 24:22 says "You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the LORD your God." The same, no partiality. The first aspect of Biblical justice is **equality**.

This Biblical idea was revolutionary in world history. The Greeks and the Romans knew nothing of it. Aristotle famously said that some races and nations deserved to be slaves. What the

Greeks and the Romans lacked was the book of Genesis, which teaches that all humans were created equally in the image of God.

In this way, Jesus was revolutionary by receiving and treating all people equally with love and respect. Samaritans were seen as inferior by the Jews, but Jesus places Samaritans on the same spiritual level as Jews. Jesus declared that God loves Gentiles, such as the widow of Zarephath. Jesus reached out to social lepers who were social outcasts, touching them and defying the social order.

Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus defined “loving my neighbour” as giving practical, financial, and medical aid to someone of a different religion and race.

The rest of the New Testament follows Jesus' rule. James chapter 2 *“Believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism ... If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,”<sup>4</sup> have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ... But you have dishonoured the poor.”*

When we consider that all people are made in God's image, Biblical justice is treating all people equally.

The second aspect of Biblical justice is **generosity**. We live in a society now that says your money belongs to you. Socialism says your money belongs to the State. So in our society, giving is optional and voluntary. In a socialist State, distribution of money is involuntary.

The Bible says your money belongs to God, who entrusts it to you. This is not a horizontal dimension, voluntary or involuntary. This is a vertical dimension. It is our relationship with God that directs us. Our money is not our own and so if we love God with all our heart, and if we love our neighbour as ourselves, then our heart will overflow with generosity, according to what we can manage, and according to the needs of others.

In Mosaic Law, practices were established to cater for the unequal distribution of wealth. The Sabbath Law required that every seventh year, all debts were cancelled. A more radical law was the Law of the Jubilee year. Every fifty years, the land went back to its original allotments. This meant that once in a lifetime, every person got a second chance, no matter how deeply into debt they had fallen. Remember we read in the book of Ruth, wealthy landowners would harvest the middle of their plot but leave food around the edges for the workers and the needy. Social class is clearly evident, but Mosaic Law provided. This giving was neither optional charity, nor State redistribution.

Based on God's Law to love God first and love your neighbour, we see the character of God in His Law of justice through generosity to the needy.

In Luke, Jesus speaks to a rich young ruler, who stored up his wealth for his own use. Jesus tells him that to enter the Kingdom of heaven, he must sell his possessions. He has to be rich toward God. There is sacrifice in generosity. We are generous because we love God first and then we love others.

The third aspect of Biblical justice is **advocacy**. Biblical justice is significant, life-changing advocacy for the poor.

Let me give you a small example of the impact of advocacy with our Mission partnership, the India Gospel League, in 2016: being turned away from the airport of Chennai in India because we were willing to speak of what we, as a team, were called to do. Advocacy for one of the

700,000 villages providing resources, lifting them out of poverty, with the hope Jesus can bring, being offered on behalf of the voices of KAC.

Psalm 41:1 says, *"Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the LORD delivers them in times of trouble."*

To have regard, or to consider, means to pay close attention to the weak and the poor. We need to take the time to understand the causes of their condition and then do something to change their situation.

Proverbs 29:7 *"The righteous care about justice for the poor but the wicked have no such concern."*

While we are to treat all people equally, we are to have special concern for the poor, the weak and the powerless.

Proverbs 31:8-9 *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."*

This call to advocacy assumes the equality of all people, but for some, they do not have the voice or the means for receiving equality.

The call to advocacy assumes the reality of oppression. Our fallen world is a highly uneven distribution of opportunity and resources.

There are at least three suggestions of advocacy in the Bible.

- There is direct relief to meet material needs.
- There is empowerment, helping a person gain self-sufficiency.
- Thirdly, as believers, we decide not to participate in unjust social structures.

The fourth aspect of justice is **responsibility**. One of the most basic definitions of justice is "giving people what they are due". We must be willing to take an honest look at our hearts and our motives.

Psalm 139:23-24 *"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."*

So, in conclusion, if you are touched by God's grace, if you are saved by faith, you will do justice.

When we understand that God has lifted us up, we want to lift up others. God gave us everything. Our greatest injustice is that we do not give everything to him. God, in His perfect justice, showed justice toward us.

Biblical justice is understood through equality, generosity, advocacy and responsibility. God's justice is that He has brought us back into relationship with Himself. What generous justice. It is modelled by Jesus. What an advocate for justice. It was lived on the Cross. What responsible justice. In the resurrection of Jesus, the gates of heaven are open to all who turn to Him. The equality of justice.

When we understand this, we become agents of justice. Amen