

**Series: "God's justice in a hurting world!"****How Should We Do Justice?****Jeremiah 9:12-24; Acts 2:1-12; 41-47; Luke 19:1-10 (8am)**

One of the most famous sayings we will ever hear from a child is "It's not fair!" Do you think that as an adult? Is justice just for me and my equity? God calls us to a justice that notices inequity for others.

Last week Pam urged us to learn from the parables Jesus used to teach us justice by faith in practical and accessible ways! Last week's terrific application of the parable of the Good Samaritan has got me thinking, reflecting, and seeking to apply God's justice in His ways and intentions. I asked myself, which parable spoke loudly to me about justice? What would be your choice?

God placed the story of the tax collector, Zacchaeus, in Luke 19:1-10, on my heart. Maybe this is impacted by my life experiences. I grew up with an immigrant father who came in poverty to a "paradise" as he calls it. All our lives, he was insistent that we always pay all our dues. My father was so proud of my first year after school commencing as a cadet Accountant. Unfortunately for Dad, day three of this career, I knew that it was not for me! So maybe this is why God put this story on my heart.

The story of Zacchaeus is a story of reconciliation that led to a radical response. Zacchaeus's pledge was not motivated by legalism but by God's grace. Having been reconciled with God by the costly grace of Jesus, Zacchaeus was now motivated to reconcile with his neighbours and victims, too. Zacchaeus's story reveals the heart of grace through its actions. It is this parable that has driven my thinking for this sermon.

True justice flows from the heart and character of God. God is righteous and just. True justice is understanding God's grace.

In Jeremiah 9:13-14 The LORD said, "It is because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law. Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their ancestors taught them."

And later in the chapter, verses 23-24; This is what the LORD says:

"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom
or the strong boast of their strength
or the rich boast of their riches,
but let the one who boasts, boast about this:
that they have the understanding to know me,
that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,
declares the LORD."

God has a piercing critique for His people. They claim to know him, but neglect the things he cares about. God is just, and God always does justice.

The right knowledge of who God is and what God does, leads to the proper knowledge of who we are and what God calls us to do.

I thought this might be a helpful moment to revisit the definition from **Tim Keller** I shared on the first sermon in this series. “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.”

God expects those who follow Him to be like Him; to strive to be just and act justly in our day-to-day lives. God is just and always works in justice. To truly know God is to delight in His justice.

God delights in justice because justice flows from His heart and character. The more we know God, the more we will delight in His justice.

God's desire for justice begins and ends with a fountain of steadfast love. The Hebrew word the prophet uses for this is '**hesed**.' This faithful love permeates God's justice and righteousness. Because God is love, his motives for justice are pure, selfless, and dependable. Justice and righteousness, motivated by sacrificial love that never runs dry.

The terms justice and righteousness are always linked in Scripture. In Tim Keller's book, **Generous Justice**, he highlights justice as right actions, and righteousness as right relationships. Right actions and right relationships, grounded in love lead to equity and love.

Unlike our justice, God's justice is always evident, because it is the comprehensive redemption, restoration, and reconciliation of all things to Himself. When we understand the saving work of Jesus, despite our complete lack of being deserving, we understand this sort of justice. It is justice based on grace. God redeems us, restores us and reconciles us to Himself.

Justice is 'to make right'. When we are living in a relationship with God, we must seek right relationships with each other. How should we do justice? The building blocks of justice lie in human dignity and the flourishing of all people.

Job 29:14 says, “I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and turban”, Job is speaking of a way of life that infused his daily life as completely as clothing covered his body. When Job says he “wears justice”, he is suggesting it is always on his mind, he is actively always looking for ways to live this way. Doing justice requires constant, sustained reflection.

My mind has been captured in this series, by the links between Mosaic Law and God's intention to build-in justice to the Laws the Israelite people must follow to please Him.

It is living a pure and uncorrupted life that is the challenge of humanity. From Adam and Eve turning away from God's ways in the Garden of Eden, it is no time at all to Genesis 11; the story of the Tower of Babel tells us that the people of the Earth were marked by pride and a lust for power. As a response to this, God “confused their speech”. They could not understand each other or work together, and as a result, they scattered into different nations.

Human pride and lust for power leads to division, strife, and hatred.

Immediately after this event, in Genesis 12, God comes to Abraham and promises to bring a salvation into the world that will bless “all the peoples of the Earth”. God is distressed that the unity of the human family has been broken, and declares to unify people again, despite the pride and arrogance that have introduced division and inequity.

The New Testament completes the story. In Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit descends on the church on the Day of Pentecost, another miracle occurs. While at Babel, people who spoke the same language couldn't understand each other, at Pentecost, everyone who spoke different languages could all understand the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles. It was a reversing of the curse of Babel.

It was a declaration of the grace of Jesus, won for us on the Cross. It is freely offered to all. All people are equal and should be treated equally in the sight of God.

In the final chapters of the Bible, a time is envisioned when God's people are united from every tribe and language and people and nation. At the climax of the world's history, brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus, there will be an end to all division and imbalance of power.

How do we do justice? We must wear it like clothing. We must know God's character and seek to be like Him. We are called to love others equally, just as God loves all people.

Our Mission at KAC describes how we are to do God's justice. 'To glorify God making Jesus known as we love and serve together.' Each one of us is called to respond to God's justice as we are unified in His truth by the Spirit.

Sharing the good news of Jesus is critical, it is what we are called to do. Sharing the good news of Jesus is the most radical ministry we can be involved in. This is true not because the spiritual is more important than the physical, but because the eternal is more important than the temporal.

If there is a God, and if life with Him for eternity is based on having a saving relationship with Him, then the most loving thing any one of us can do is to help another find a saving faith in that God.

In this way, doing justice is spreading the Gospel. Doing justice can lead people to give the message of the Gospel of grace a hearing.

Acts of mercy and justice are not Gospel proclamation. We must faithfully share the saving work of Jesus, as we respond to the saving work of Jesus in our own lives by sharing grace, just as we have freely been offered grace. But like Zacchaeus, when we know the grace of God, our response should be radical.

Acts 2 is again a picture of this. The disciples encountered God with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Their response was a radical sharing with the needy. The experience of salvation led to generosity, which led to more people becoming open to the message of salvation.

By Acts 6:7, Luke says "So the word of God spread." The word "so" indicates a cause/ effect relationship. This attitude of justice, of caring for the poor, the needy and the vulnerable, which was so rare in the Graeco-Roman world, was striking to observers and made them open to the Word of God.

In this way, as God's people together, we are known for being a healing community. We should be a place of healing and grace.

So how do we do justice? To fulfil God's Mission among us and beyond us "To glorify God making Jesus known as we love and serve together." It means ministering in word and deed to

a hurting, unjust world. Let me share a couple of practical suggestions for how we should do justice.

1) Being 'with', not 'for':

Can we do justice in ways that are more "with" people rather than 'doing to' or 'for' them? This practice means listening, involving communities in making decisions together, enabling people to have agency and dignity, and standing in solidarity together. This is the key to connecting with our Vision for Christ proclaimed in our community!

2) Humility in Community:

Can we do justice in ways that are humble and honest? This practice involves being a partner and a collaborator, not a rescuer or a provider. It means we need to notice, like the good Samaritan, and act, not alone necessarily, just as the good Samaritan needed the Inn Keeper.

3) Transformation

"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in." **Desmond Tutu**

Can our justice-seeking focus both on present injustices and on the future transformation of deep and systemic injustices?

This practice involves engaging with the reality of the world as it is, but also holding on to the hope that transformation, healing, and right relationship can and will be restored, leading to the flourishing of all God's creation.

4) Prayer:

"God's command to "pray without ceasing" is founded on the necessity we have of His grace to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it, than the body can without air." **John Wesley**

Our justice-seeking, as individuals and churches, must be established in prayer, enabling us to express our passion and our failings, to offer thanks for change, and to seek God's will?

Prayer connects us to the character and work of the God of justice, so that in all we do we draw on His limitless grace.

It is not unique now for Christians to serve the needy. There are many people and organisations who speak out for justice in this way. However, we offer the Gospel of Jesus, by which all people can be born again into God's family with the certain hope of a future in eternity with God, their Father. So, let's "glorify God, making Jesus known, as we love and serve together."

This is how we should do justice!