



ALL SAINTS

PRESBYTERIAN

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

“Strange Beauty: Justice” | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | February 7, 2021

Isaiah 58

“Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. 3 ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. 4 Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

6 “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; 9 ... If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, 10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday....

13 “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; 14 then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your

Tim begins by referring to Tim Keller’s categorization of prevalent concepts of justice in our culture (libertarian, liberal, utilitarian, and post-modern) and joins him in reminding us that these ever-changing cultural assumptions are largely non-Biblical. That leaves us with Biblical justice as a standard, and Tim turns to Isaiah 58 to flesh out the concept of God’s idea of justice.

I Necessity

Is. 58:2,3 The nation of Israel considered themselves good and moral, but appearances deceived. Isaiah explains the qualifier “as if” of v. 2 in the next verse, saying that the wealthy seek their own business, not the business of God: they rest on the sabbath, but their slaves and servants still work on that day. Isaiah emphasizes that justice is only true to God’s standards if it applies to all people equally. Our short-sightedness reflects the same problems. (1) We may think we have a relationship with God, but if we don’t have a life-saving relationship with the poor as well, we fool ourselves, and (2) many people just don’t realize how unjust the world is and how complicit we are in injustice, even for example, relationships between black and white believers. The first step is to cry out for justice on behalf of all. The gospel requires both retributive justice (giving the guilty punishment), which encompasses vengeance, and distributive justice (giving everyone right treatment), which ministers to physical needs in compassion. Conservatives tend to emphasize the first, and liberals the second, but God endorses both. The Book of Revelations features Jesus the King, returned to administer this complete justice.

II Summary

Tim Keller’s article points to three areas of the administration of justice.

- A. Equal treatment—rejection of social, legal, and racial inequality. In Lev. 24:22 the nation of Israel took the radical stand that their laws applied equally to insiders by blood *and* outsiders, the aliens in their midst. God is one, and all people, regardless of their condition, bear His image. Is. 58:7

father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

James 1:27-2:9

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. 2:1 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” 4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man”

Luke 10:29-37

“And who is my neighbor?” 30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” 37 He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

B. Special concerns—the widow, the orphan, the immigrant, and the poor encompass four types of people who are alone, who have no advocate or protectors. Thus, the entire nation should protect and provide back-up for them. Prov. 31:8-9.

C. Generosity—Our money and our resources are not our own. Everything belongs to God, so we can do as Isaiah says (58:10) “pour yourself out.” This concept occurs in the Book of Esther, where the name of God is never mentioned, but Esther obeys by pouring out everything to God and risking position, comfort, and even her life.

III How?

Take delight in the Lord (Is 58:13,14). Hold all we have differently, as from God and at His disposal. Take our eyes off power or wealth and fix them on the Lord. Duty and shame don’t motivate us to justice or change our hearts. Only delight in God works. The reminder in Deut. 24 that Israel was a nation of slaves in Egypt and God redeemed them from there applies to us as well. We, too, have been redeemed.

We should remember that when Jesus became man, he was poor, oppressed, wrongly accused, imprisoned, and executed, and he endured it all willingly for the sake of justice against us. That’s how much Jesus delights in us. When we remember that God’s justice against us has been satisfied and when we delight in Him, we can receive new hearts and become like Jesus in our generosity and our justice. It’s the only way!

Discussion

1. Pray about parts of your life that you hold back from God and consider your own possessions and status. If you can’t identify anything, that’s good, but also probably not accurate. Pray for eyes to see.
2. Consider widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor. Once again, pray for eyes to see where you might be an agent of justice and protection for these people. Ask God to bring opportunities to you to administer His distributive justice.
3. In order to practice justice, we need some education. Talk with other Christians about ways they have been used by God and share some of your own stories to give further ideas about how to be an agent of God’s justice.
4. Read Tim Keller’s article on justice.

<https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/justice-in-the-bible/>

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