

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Jan 24, 2021. "Caste: How does God define justice?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

Even though it's a new year, thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Sunday.

After a three week series diving into a scriptural understanding of healing division within communities, we felt like we needed to talk about systems and structures that lead to division. Yes, we fully embrace that people through their choices, actions, lack of spiritual maturity and more add to division in our world. But to ignore structures baked and written into our society, and how they contribute to the division in our world only addresses half of the causes of disunity. So, we ventured into somewhat risky waters, using an incredible book "**Caste**" by Isabel Wilkerson to help us understand, unpack, and begin to deal with systems that create inequality and injustice. And to do the profound work of creating a society that grows unity. These conversations are difficult, uncomfortable, because they force us to own our part in perpetuating elements within society that continually drive and promote disunity and division. Bottom line, these things are often hidden out of our sight, don't adversely affect us, so when they're pointed out our first reaction is to become defensive.

All of that to say, we have to have as open a mind as possible in these discussions, and...have an open mind to having an open mind, (I know that sounds REALLY woo-woo). And we have to be willing to admit there are things built into our society that hurt others that we simply cannot see. So, nervous yet? Let's start with some questions. And they will become increasingly pointed.

How would you define and explain inequality and injustice to someone?

What is your understanding of some of the causes of inequality and injustice?

How do we miss, not see, the systems and structures that lead to injustice...and why?

A good bit of scripture was used and we're going to list it all here. Kristen led us through a very thoughtful intentional journey of making sure we understand the difference between a cultural understanding of justice, and a scriptural understanding of one. And an important part of this work is developing a good working understanding of the differences between; consequences, punishment, and justice. So, let's dig into those terms, and then we'll go over the scripture used.

How do you define each of these; consequences, punishment, and justice?

These are such important words that in reality have such different meanings, so we tend to just mash them all together under basically the same understanding. And we end up hurting people by not handling them well, and eventually it leads to division.

Kristen said the scripture defines justice two ways. First, the punishment of wrongdoings. But secondly, and the one we often miss is *“giving people their rights”*.

So, how and why do we get lost in this other understanding of justice?

I will list each scripture with a question or two about each one for you two wrestle with the passage.

Deuteronomy 10:17-21.

What jumped out to you about the topic of God’s understanding of justice?

How does it challenge you to view others who are not like you?

Psalm 82:1-4.

What jumped out to you about the topic of God’s understanding of justice?

What kind of specific action do you see rising out of this passage?

Isaiah 1:16-17.

What jumped out to you about the topic of God’s understanding of justice?

This passage seems pretty straight forward. Why do we not practice it?

Job 8:1-7. 12:5-6. 21:29-30. 34:1-12.

What jumped out to you about the topic of God’s understanding of justice?

In these passages from the story of Job, how does it paint a picture of the justice of God?

John 9:1-3.

What jumped out to you about the topic of God’s understanding of justice?

How does it speak into your understanding of the differences between consequences, punishment, and justice?

III Challenge.

I realize there was a lot of scripture used, and it may have been somewhat overwhelming. But it was so important to see and understand not only a more scriptural understanding AND practice of true justice, but to just see how that theme is woven all through God’s revealing of himself to us. For some broken reason, we have this karma like, work based, understanding of people’s situation and conditions they often find themselves in. And we don’t realize there are many circumstances that create those situations often beyond people’s control. And that God’s purpose in all he has done through the centuries was to establish a relationship between his people that practices the justice he calls us to. This is what this series is about, and the work we are to dedicate ourselves to.

So, the final question. How will you live out this scriptural understanding of justice?