

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Did God Really Say?

PART

6

TITLE

The Sour Grapes of Injustice

SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 18:1-32



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Providence family it's good to see you, if you're in this room or over in the room over here, or if you're happen to be at home. I know this is a pretty nasty morning, and so if you are at home, we're really glad that you've joined us also, but it is good to see you.

If you have a Bible in your hand, you can turn with me to the first page of the Bible, and you can also turn to Ezekiel 18. Those will probably be the most important places if you want to look in a Bible. If you don't have a Bible, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one of your own, take that as a gift. That's what they're there for. And so it is good to see you. These are significant days, and these are hard days.

In fact, I know there's a lot of people who have a lot of things going on in your own personal life. And so you walked in here already feeling heavy, and I'm going to add something else that's kind of heavy and we want to pray. And that is that nearly 30,000 people have been confirmed dead overseas because of an earthquake. And you guys have heard this. Turkey and Syria are actually two places to where we have sent people from our own church family with the very message that we talk about, we sing about, about Jesus. They've gone to these places to share the news, and I should say that they're all safe. Those are safe. And they're seeking to care for people in the best way that they know how. And we have the opportunity to help. In fact, we have.

And that's where even when we talk about these hard things, I just want to say thank you this morning really for two things. One is just your incredible generosity to Providence, that's one. But then two, is that when we put forward a church financial budget that you approve, it includes monies that are set aside for just these sorts of things. And because we have recognized, as a church family, that God has an enormous heart for people and for need around the world. And so he gives to us freely, graciously, and you as a church family have shared those same realities, those same virtues, to be generous and to be even then willing to send it along. And as a result of that, we were able to send \$50,000 this week to our partners to help them to buy things like food and blankets to be able to pass out to people who are in need. And so the needs are immense. The total is going to increase. This morning I read that they've probably believe it will double by the time that they're done counting. And so let's pray for them now.

Father in heaven, we bow before you and what we see and hear is only a fraction of what you see and hear. And so we come before you and ask that you would, in a remarkable way, allow your church in this region of the world to stand up and to be a light during such a difficult time. I pray, Father, that you would be gracious to sustain our partners and friends and supporting churches with strength and energy and resource blankets. We pray, Father, as they seek to give tangible expressions of care, but also expressions of love and truth as they seek to share the gospel and point people to the hope of Jesus. We're aware that although the gospel in many ways, it came from this region of the world, it is there no longer or at least it's there in only small, small pockets.

And as a result of that, we know that many of the people that are grieving a loss of a loved one do not have the hope of Jesus. They don't know what it is to grieve with hope. And so we ask God that you would cause

your spirit to move in this region of the world. And we pray for a revival. We pray that people's eyes would be open to the reality of Jesus Christ, His authority, His deity, His mercy, His kindness, His compassion, His substitutionary death on our behalf, and many would turn in believe. And so would you sustain and help. I pray for those in the room who already and also feel just heaviness. And I just ask for lightness that you would allow them to flourish. So we look to your word now and as we think about a broken world and when we begin talking about justice, we long to hear from you. So would you speak and would you give help to me and to all of us we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

So we're in a series it's called Did God Really Say? And what we're looking at is God's plans for life, what happens in the world as it gets so confused when we reject those plans for life. And in particular, we're looking at very specific areas of confusion that we see in our world today. Areas such as authority, sanctity of life, race, gender, sexuality, responsibility, justice and salvation. You see that today we're on responsibility. It's really the first side of a coin that will finish next week on justice. We're also looking at God's plan for restoration in each of these things, and the hope that we might be able to flourish again.

And we know that there's a lot of these ideas that have differing ideas, interpretations, and sometimes it's hard to even know perhaps what I'm saying when we use words. Sometimes different groups use the same words to mean two different things. And so all of the resources, not only for this sermon, all the sermons, as well as three other supplemental articles to help you understand some of these ideas are available at a site, it's just pray.org/say, everything's free. It's just there. You just go to it and you can read there. And if you want to follow along this morning with this sermon with my notes, you can go to that place, and you can look for a sermon there that's called The Sour Grapes of Injustice.

We all know that justice is appealing. There's something about it. Even the word itself is a pretty attractive word. It's always made a short list, a very desirable cultural virtues that anybody who is building a society, a cultural group, a workplace, where there's people and they're trying to interact with one another, it just seems like justice is a healthy ingredient to add to that society. And it was God who planted this within our heart 121 times within the scriptures. He makes appeals for us to pursue justice such as, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Makes it sound attractive, doesn't it? It is attractive. And it's what heaven is going to be like. And as we seek to take some of those ideas to say, man, if we were building a society, what would we do? And so what we find is that these ideas of justice are found in a lot of different places, a lot of different important documents even.

When people are thinking about establishing a new country or a new place, and so we have a thing called a constitution, and the very first sentence of our constitution, it says, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice." We put it at the end of our pledge, "With liberty and justice for all." Even if our application of these truths is lacking. The very fact that when individuals are sitting down saying, how should we describe it? What should we want to? They thought those are attractive ends. Its interesting is that whenever somebody is wrong today, it's justice that everyone claims that they want. We

even name our superheroes, the Justice League, and they meet in the Hall of justice.

There's something appealing about justice that always has been this way. And so when you add social to the word justice, it just seems like a match made in heaven. Social sounds like personal, relational, benevolent, merciful, kind. Justice is strong and fair and right. Bring those together, and it sounds like a really great thing. From a distance no doubt, the term social justice seems to fit with the kingdom that we're all led to imagine when we read an Isaiah nine that Jesus Christ is going to uphold His kingdom with justice and righteousness, not only this time but forevermore. It seems to be fitting with our calling from Isaiah chapter one when he says, "Learn to do good. Seek justice. Correct oppression." However, the closer we get to what people mean or understanding what people mean when they use the term social justice, the more confusion seems to exist and the more discrepancy appears between it and the justice that we find in the pages of the Bible.

In Acts 17, the man named Paul, he goes into a city called Athens, and when he gets there, he sees people worshipping all kinds of different idols. And what he seeks to do is he goes in and instead of just tearing it apart, he seeks to understand, he seeks to build bridges, not to affirm, but to be able to build a bridge to be able to talk about Jesus. And the fact is, I want to take a few minutes before we get into Genesis 1:1, I want to talk about the two different ideas, a view from the Bible of what is social justice, and a view from our society, of what is social justice.

And the reason it's so important that we do so is because Christ who has saved us has called us to reach people and make disciples. And this is where people live. This is what they're understanding. This is their worldview. And so instead of simply to teach it and the hope that we would get smarter, the hope is that we would be able to understand how people are thinking. And then as we understand how people are thinking, we might be able to build a bridge to be able to talk about the greatest hope in the world, the only hope in the world, and that is Jesus Christ. So I want to define each of these.

First is the Bible. From the Bible, social justice. First of all, I don't know, some people already read the wrong way because the Bible doesn't say social justice. It doesn't. You can't open it up and find the term social justice together. What you find though is in the Bible you find the word justice and you find that what it means impacts social life, okay? So that's what I mean. And what it means is this. In the Bible, what you find is it's a submission in the heart to God that brings our lives, relationships, and responsibilities. That's social order. In the compliance with His law in order to render to people what he says they are due.

So you notice two things about this. First of all, it's radically God centric. We want to know who he is. We want to submit our hearts to him. We want to know what he says, and we want to obey and bring our lives into compliance with what he says as it relates to others. And then second, it has tremendous social impact because people are involved, our lives, relationships and responsibilities. Next week we're going to dive into this really, really deeply.

Now, what is secular social justice? What you find most people when they say the word social justice, this is what they mean today in America, it's the belief that everyone has the right to equal possession, privilege and opportunity. And to the extent that it is missing, society is unjust and needs realignment through redistribution. And so you notice that it's not God-centric. It's our perspective matters and His perspective is ignored. And therefore what you find is this sounds like if you go, "That sounds like what I studied in History, this thing called socialism." Well, the fact is that socialism is basically this in the form of economics and this and various other things. It flows from a theory called critical theory. And you know just a little bit about critical theory to understand a little bit more about this. So you understand where people are at, what they're thinking, what they're experiencing in life.

Critical theory views everybody through a particular lens and it puts every single one of us into groups. And those groups are oppressor and oppressed. On the basis of things that we were born with or things that we've chosen in the world such as race, gender, sexuality, the place where we were born, formal education, things like this.

And so here's how it works. You say, "I'm not oppressed anybody." Personal oppression isn't what they mean necessarily. Sometimes it simply means this, is that these individuals, and so if you can imagine a line or go, this is the oppressors, this is the oppressed. And so they would put men on top as oppressors, women as the oppressed. They would put White people with white skin, right as oppressive and everyone else as oppressed. And they would do this with every single demographic category that you can imagine, all kinds of different. And so what happens then, of course this pits us against people, is that this oppression may not actually be physical, may not be motivated by hatred or even personal actions. It might simply be because the majority of people is this, is that simply because they have more votes or they have more authority, they can use those votes than those authority to protect their own ideas or ideologies. And so the culture has looked and said, "This is oppressing people who are on the bottom."

Now those who live in multiple oppressed categories are said to experience something called intersectionality. Now I know if you're like brand new to all of this, we have invented all kinds of words in the last five or 10 years as a nation, but you'll hear sometimes social justice and intersectionality. You say, "What is that?" It's simply this. Is that let's just say that you have a woman who's Black and gay. All three of those categories put her as a oppressed person. And so she would have, this is where three intersections of oppression, making her oppression significantly more, exponentially more than someone with two or one or zero. And as such, she by default, this would her three times more a candidate for social justice.

So what is social justice then? Well, those who advocate for it and those who work toward it, what they're basically doing is identifying peoples who are oppressed, assessing outcomes on the basis of diversity, equity, inclusion, and then through redistribution of possession, privilege and opportunity, they're bringing society into compliance with different outcomes. And so, some people you hear and you heard the word social justice, and this is where it gets confusing, right? Is that some people hear social justice and the first thing that

pops into our mind is us bringing our lives into compliance with God's law to be able to render to people what he says they're due. And other people hear the exact same words, and instead they imagine bringing society into compliance with man's law to render to people what our perceptions say they are due. But both of these worldviews, they fly the same banner.

And that's why some of you right now you really want me to affirm social justice. It may be to affirm really hard life experiences or to affirm real cases of injustice or selfishness or greed or social class, entrenchment or whatever it is. And there's others in the room who really right now want me to just tear apart the ideology, either because you see obvious flaws or because you really want to protect your stuff.

So let me be clear, injustice is real and it's everywhere. Second, every human ideology is flawed. And third, we will see this next week, is that pursuing biblical justice is going to require much more of your stuff. Because God's law is truly heavier and more packed with mercy than man's law.

And so my aim is not to preach for or against social justice, it's to preach the gospel. And to preach the gospel, we have to protect the gospel, to protect your understanding of the gospel, I should say. And this is where it's really important, you see, because these kinds of theories of social justice, what they're saying is that people are born into different levels of guilt. If you are born as this person, you are this guilty. If you're born as this person, you are less guilty. By default than it applies a different standard of justice. Rules for these people should be applied differently to people who have to live down here who've experienced so much oppression. So even the standard of justice is compromised. And third, it attempts to save ourselves by dismantling inequality forming in itself its own makeshift gospel, which is no gospel at all.

You see what these ideas do is they threaten our understanding of things like personal sin, and personal responsibility, and one standard before God. And there is one savior. And our pursuits of equality are saving neither ourselves or anyone else that only Jesus Christ, through His substitutionary death and resurrection, is the savior of the world. And that's said today what I want to do is clarify the gospel and then next week I want to show you what happens to a heart when they're living in compliance to God's standard of justice and how we render to people what he says they're due.

And so we begin with, well the beginning. Where else would we begin? In the beginning, God created the heavens in the earth. We find here that He is almighty and eternal and He is the only God and as the creator of life, He's the only one who has answers for life. And what's interesting is when you open up the Bible and you begin to listen to what He says is true about Himself, the first thing that... Well, there's lots of attributes that He says about himself, but one of them forms the first truth that I want you to see as it relates to justice and that is that God Himself is just. He's the standard and the source of justice.

And it's interesting when you open up the Bible is that the word righteousness and the word justice, they

always run together. It seems like they're like best friends. And the reason is because what justice is, when the Bible says that God is just what it means is that God does what is right, He gives what is right, and he delivers a verdict that is right. And the fact is that we don't get a vote on this. He tells us in Psalm 89 that righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. That's who He is.

Man is under this terrible delusion that we pick a God that fits our sensibilities out of a lineup of suitors. And God looks at the mockery of our idolatry and he says in Isaiah 45, "I am the Lord, and there is no other. Besides me, there is no God." You see, one of the sad things that takes place is that people, when they hear something it seems to strike against their sensibilities or taste about who they want to worship, they might say something like, "Well, I could never worship a God like that," but if there is only one God as exactly who you will worship. He doesn't bend. We are to bend.

God is not a Build-a-Bear. You go into the store, you pay the money, and then you pick out favorable accessories and attributes so that you take it home and you're like, "Oh, I got a fireman bear." There is one true living God and He has told us who He is and he's told us that he is just, all His ways are justice, just an upright and He. And what that means is that the world that he created was an environment of justice before we arrived. And so when He creates us and He brings us in, we move into an area of justice and we need to pay attention then to His justice because that's the only way to flourish in His world. That's exactly what He did. He creates man and woman.

He says, "Let us make man in our image after our lightness. And so God created man in His own image, in the image of God, he created a male and female, He created them." And so to place humanity in an environment that was surrounded in every way like a fish tank that's full of water with justice, brings us to the second major point and that is that God Almighty has created us in His image accountable to Him. Each one of us were created by God. You're you're so important. You really are. You're created by God for God, to live in a relationship with God and to answer to God. But if you're created by someone, for someone to live with someone and answer to someone and you lose that someone, you are lost. And God wanted to protect us from this kind of lostness. And so He gave man an instruction that included a restriction.

He says, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but if the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." You see, within God's just and loving boundaries, there go man and woman, they enjoyed each other and they enjoyed perfect peace. And in this peace didn't last very long because very next chapter in chapter three, Satan enters the garden after a failed tent to usurp the throne of heaven. He was arc angel when he comes and says, "I have a seat in heaven, but that's a better seat that he has. I want that seat." He's thrown out of heaven and he comes to the earth. The first thing he says is, "Did God really say?" It's very important you understand why he did this? He attacks God's character in their own perception and the reason he does so is because no human being rises above their understanding of God. You will simply, nor will I, outpace in our forgiveness of other people, what we

imagine God will forgive. We will not outlove our perspective of God's love. We will not be more just than our perspective of God's justice. To be wrong in our thinking about who God is, irreparably distorts our view of justice until we begin to think rightly about him and His justice. This is who he is.

Sure enough, they sinned against God and the first thing that happened is they died spiritually. They began to feel guilt and insecurity, wanting to hide from God and each other. The Bible says tragically that, their hearts that at once were inclined to say my life and gifts and strength for your good, I want to serve you. That was the DNA of the garden. Was suddenly shifted to where we began to say, your life and your resources, your freedoms for my good. Don't you see that this fundamental shift of the human heart, my life for your good, transitioning to your life or my good, it is the foundation of every act of injustice? And that heart resides in every one of us. Every one of us.

Adam's sin nature we're told was passed like DNA to every subsequent generation down to us. And so in Romans five it says, "Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin. And so death spread to all men because all sinned." We've all sinned. And Adam, it's fascinating, he seems like a pretty big important character in the Bible, doesn't he? I mean he is. He only talks three times, or at least he's only recorded three times. This is not a whole lot. And those three, as the human representative of our lives, actually tells us a whole lot about us.

We looked at this two weeks ago, but I want to show it again because it's important to the idea of justice. The first time we find Adam speaking, he sees Eve for the very first time after God created her and he says, "That's a good thing. This is bone in my bones fleshing my flesh." In other words, the very first thing that happens instinctively when our heart is not with sin is we look at what God does when we go, "You're doing a good job. I affirm this. That's good." And then our mind gets all distorted with our understanding of God, we sin against God and suddenly we feel guilt. We feel like we need to hide. God finds Adam and Eve in the garden and he's hiding behind a bush. God comes to Adam and He says, "What are you doing here?" And he says, "I was naked and I hid myself." It's I implied, "Well, where's Eve? I don't know every man for himself." And this is the second thing that's true of all humanity is when we sin against God, we feel guilty. Self-preservation becomes king of our life.

Now think about this in the term of justice. This is my plot of land. This is my stuff. This is mine. You get your own. This is my bush. I'll hide behind here. You find another place. God says, "Well, why in the world did you do this?" Third thing he says, "The woman you gave to me..." "I'm a victim here. Don't you see God? These were great till she showed up and you're the one who put her here. It's your fault. It's her fault, but it's not my fault." Which indicates that the default mode of sinners is to blame others and to play the victim. We do it on our marriage, with our kids, our finances, our work. We do it what we say, violence, hatred. We do something. Someone says, "Hey, I saw that." "It's not my fault. I was instigated because of..."

And so into this pain, God promises remarkably mercifully a rescuer. He says one day a son is going to be born of woman. Satan's going to strike at his heel, but he is going to crush Satan's head, restore you back into a relationship with me and establish a kingdom of justice. And the rest of the Old Testament traces the son through terrible acts of injustice in routine appeals to do and seek justice. Such as in Amos when He says, "Ye who afflict the righteous and you take a bribe and turn aside the needy in the gate, let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." And so into this mess of bribery and injustice and all kinds of mess, God clarifies His terms. We're going to talk about one of them today, and we're going to find what happens when we trust that and then we trust in God's solution. Next week we're going to find a number of other terms of how we're supposed to be seeking justice, but it all begins with this one and it's the third truth, and that is that God focused His terms of justice around personal responsibility. There is no hope for you or me being in heaven until we take personal responsibility for our sin. Let me show you.

Ezekiel. If you turn to Ezekiel earlier, we're finally there. Okay? Ezekiel was in His 20s when Israel was invaded and he and 10,000 others were exiled to Babylon. It was in just oppressive hard. And when he was in Babylon far from his home, God makes him a prophet. He comes to him in chapter three and He says, "I've made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me." What was His message? Essential message throughout Ezekiel was this, the soul that sins will die. Let me show you.

Chapter 18:1. "The word of the Lord came to me, what do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live declares, the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine. The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine. The soul who sins shall die." They were crying. They were using this proverb about grapes. What it meant was this, our fathers ate the grapes and we got the pain. We're victims here. Someone else's responsibility. And God says, "As sure as I am God, I am going to find a way to make you stop saying this. To stop blaming other people for your own response to the difficult circumstances in your life."

You see, our circumstances are absolutely influenced by others. This all began with Adam, and his behavior created an environment in which we all have to live. It's a really hard thing. And yet none of us die and are judged for his sin. We die and are judged for our sin. And this is why, God does not tolerate the idea that disavows responsibility. This is so central to the gospel. We simply do not come to Christ until we see that we have personal responsibility in our own sin before God whose just and whose justice demands that he will deliver a verdict that is right.

And so God wants to illustrate this with three generations. We won't be able to read all of it, but I can at least point to these three generations. First, there's a grandfather, we don't know he is one yet until we keep reading. But in verse five it says, "If a man is righteous and does what is just and right, he shall surely live, declares

the Lord.” I’m like, “All right, that sounds great.” And then all of a sudden we learned that he has a son. He says now, “If he fathers a son who’s violent, a shedder of blood and who does any of these things though He, himself, did none of these things,” meaning it’s a long list of sin that’s found right here, okay? He says, “He shall surely die, His blood shall be upon himself.”

And what that means is that even though a man had a very, very righteous dad, what he’s saying is that righteous accounts do not cross generational lines. You may have grown up in a home where mom and dad taught you the gospel and loved you well. They may love Jesus Christ, but their righteous standing before God is not included in your account before God. You may live in the shade of their blessing, but you do not enjoy their righteous standing. Well, we’re told that this son has a son, so this is the third generation. He says, “Suppose this man father’s the son who sees all the sins that His dad has done, and he sees and he does not do likewise,” meaning he goes, “I want to live like my grandpa, not like my dad.” “He shall not die for His father’s sin and iniquity. He shall surely live.” In other words, we can feel the generational effects of sin but not share in the guilt.

And he in this amazing chapter, God finishes with a simple appeal. It’s really a beautiful thing. In particular, because we’ve all sinned and fallen short of His glory. And that’s what He says, he says, “Repent.” “Repent and turn from your transgressions.” You may have done that long list of things that He talks about that were really sinful things. He goes, “Make yourself a new heart and a new spirit. I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, so turn and live.” It’s possible to turn and live. Now you notice this sentence here, “Make yourself a new heart.” The only way he could speak this is knowing that he was about to send the special son.

And that’s exactly what he did. He sent His son, Jesus Christ, to the earth. He lived with no sin. He cared for people with perfect justice. Rendered to everyone what God said they are due. And then he went to a cross and he died in our place. He was buried in a grave. He rose from the dead and he says, “If you will trust me, something amazing. What happened to you,” that Ezekiel, all those years before Christ referred to in Ezekiel 36, what is it? “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you.” You trust Jesus Christ. He takes your sin, He gives His righteousness, He puts His spirit in you. And Jesus calls this being born again. A new heart.

And this leads us to the very last point I want you to see. And that is that Christ came to prove God’s justice and be our justifier. There’s a very, very important thing to ask and that is, how does God remain just and acquit the guilty? Like any judge that would be in one of our courthouses, if they said, “I know he did kill a lot of people, he’s definitely a mass murderer, but you know what? He grew up in a hard situation, so let’s acquit him.” We would say, what? That’s a bad judge. That’s not a just judge. So how is it possible for us, each one of us, who have already sinned against God, how could God remain just and acquit us of our sin? And the only way he can do it is to make sinners righteous. How would he do that? He does it through Jesus.

In Romans chapter three, this is what He says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.”

Notice what he’s saying. First of all, there is one standard of righteousness and justice and it’s the glory of God. It’s not what you imagine. It’s not what I imagine. It’s God’s justice. And He says, and we’ve all fallen short of that. We’ve all created a debt that we cannot pay. But God in His loving mercy He says that he put forward His son Christ Jesus as a propitiation. That’s a substitutionary sacrifice. Where Jesus who has no sin dies in our place. And for everyone who receives this by faith, who puts their faith in Jesus Christ, God gives them a gift and it’s by grace. It’s not by merit, it’s not by what we earn. It’s all grace. And what is that gift? He calls it to be justified. That means to be forgiven of sin and be given the righteousness of Jesus, so he makes sinners righteous.

This is why the very next verse says He does all this so that He might be the just. He knows the wage of sin is death. Someone must die for sin. And to be the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. And this is the gospel and it’s available to each one of us.

So let me finish this morning with just a few applications. First, let me encourage you to yield to the Bible as your authority. This yield to the Bible is our authority. Every single authority forms a worldview. Lens through which we view the world. And every worldview answers at very least five questions. And I want to show you what they are. Who am I? So my identity. What’s the problem of the world? Why are things so busted up? What’s the solution? What is my life purpose? Why am I here? And what happens when I die? What’s my destiny? Where am I going?

Critical theory answers these questions this way. It says that we have been born into a group. That’s our identity. That we are oppressed. That’s our problem. That salvation is in equality. That’s the solution. That we dismantle, that we give our lives to, dismantling inequity. That’s our life purpose. And that utopia arrives when inequity is gone. That’s our destiny.

But the Bible, however, says something completely different. It says that we are created in the image of God and that’s our identity. That we have sinned against God who is holy, that is our problem. That we are saved by trusting in Jesus’ death and resurrection, that’s our solution. That he empowers us to then live with love and to pursue justice for other people, that is our life purpose. And that we will one day stand before a holy God and give an account of our life and on the basis of our faith in Jesus Christ, spend forever in heaven or hell, that is our destiny. For the good of your soul forever that it might flourish forever. Trust the Bible as your authority.

Second, let’s saturate our minds with scripture. You might think that this is unnecessary if we’re doing the

first one. The problem is, I simply know too many Christians who believe the Bible is the authority and who never read it.

Next week we're going to talk about biblical justice. Now, you're going to find this, that we simply cannot bring our lives into compliance with God's law to render to people what he says they are due if our Bibles remain closed. When people declare that they believe in biblical authority and then fail to read the Bible, really not knowing how to live, it leads to all kinds of terribly confusing behaviors.

For example, people can see us as Christians protecting the unborn life under the banner of sanctity of human life and then be utterly confused about our concern for life when they see us laughing at immigrants as they're bussed to cities as a political stunt.

If we would read the Bible, we would see that God actually has instructions of what the immigrant is supposed to be rendered. And if we would read the Bible, we would also see that people are never designed to be pawns. If it was coconuts lined up at the southern border, and they didn't know what to do with them, and so they bus them to other states, it probably wouldn't be such a problem. But these people are created in the image of God. And I recognize that there's all kinds of issues when it comes to legal immigration. I realize there is unjust entry. I realize there's all kinds of issues that I don't have answers to. I simply know this. The answer for the Christian and responding to it is not to laugh at the people being used as pawns.

It is the life of Jesus that validates this. Jesus when he was a baby, He had a death warrant for His life. And so His parents brought him across a border to Egypt. He eventually comes back home. But what happens? I know it's not the case. What happens if they have the lines there and they had places and they say, let's put them on a bus. Would you laugh at Him? Would you laugh at the one whose very blood is going to take you to heaven?

Third, let's not allow personal responsibility to strip us of mercy. We should be very careful how we look upon people because they're people. Social theory always pit people against people making one an oppressor and another oppress making a skeptical defensive against and towards one another. We have to remember that people have a soul, every single one of them. And poverty and justice sits heavy on that soul as well as their kids. Every single one of us, myself included, know people who are poor because they're lazy. I know people who are poor because they're lazy.

But the Bible also tells us that there are some cases of real poverty that are not on the basis of laziness but of the basis of injustice such as in Proverbs 13 that says that "There's ground that would yield food for the poor, but it's swept away through injustice."

Let me give you a modern example, or at least kind of modern at the end of World War II. Did you know that

nearly 1.2 million Black soldiers were denied the GI Bill? They was aimed at helping veterans after the war by providing college tuition, home loans and insurance. 1.2 million families.

This injustice widened already significant wealth gap that lingers to this day, which is why today, this is just one example that contributed to the reality that today the African American population within America faces a poverty rate that is doubled in the rest of the country. They're people. The fact is no matter the cause that people struggle, we can always show mercy. We don't and shouldn't feel guilt for sins that we didn't commit. But if we are following Jesus, we will spend less time justifying cause and dismissing possibility and more time helping people.

How do we help them? We share the gospel. Man's greatest problem is guilt before God. So we must continue to extend ourselves to the point of discomfort to be able to reach people with the gospel telling them what can ultimately save them.

And that leads us to two last ones that are really about us personally. First, let me encourage you to take personal responsibility for your own sin. I realize that unjust circumstances may explain a lot of your pain, but they do not justify any of your sin. It is utterly futile to blame God or anyone else for your response to difficult circumstances that were sinful. Instead, let me encourage you to point your heart to Christ to repent and live. And that gets to the very last one, and that is for those of you who have never put your faith in trust in Christ, I beg you this morning to invite Christ in your life. Put your faith and trust in Him. The day is coming when you are going to stand before the judge of all the earth and He is going to deliver a verdict that is right. And on that day, His holiness is going to burn up every desire within us to talk to blame or to justify ourself. On that day, none of us will be inclined to speak of our morality or resume for we will not be raising the moral average of that room. On that day, only those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and received His righteousness as a gift of grace will stand secure. Which is why Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I'm He, the Christ, you will die in your sins." You don't have to. Put your trust in Christ today. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we bow before you and ask that you would help take a lot of ideas, and some of them very complex and confusing, and simplify them to the place that we would recognize that you are good and you just do what is right and that we have sinned and we are in need of a savior. There's only one savior, and it is Jesus. Would you cause us to be thankful for the mercies that you have poured out to us and open-hearted to pouring those mercies upon others? Would you help us to see people as people and not to forget that they're people? Valuable in every way to you and to us. So now, Lord, as we sing to you, we just beg, God, just begged that you would open up our hearts wide. And as our hearts are open wide, would you do every kind of spiritual surgery that's necessary to root out sin that would strip away the ability to flourish? Help us to believe you. Sing to you now we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Would you stand? Let's sing.



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