

Series: **God is...So What?**
Today's Title: **"God is Righteous & Just"**
November 20, 2022 – *Selected Passages* – Sermon 14 of 17

Objective: To help people understand God's judgment – how just and righteous salvation is.

Opening Prayer

Justice and righteous.

A moral person has a positive view of these things - but they may not have a strong, emotional appreciation for them.

But those who have suffered injustice – those who have suffered at the hands of the wicked – the hands of the unrighteous – they tend to be people who have a strong appreciation for justice and righteousness!

For those of us who have lived in the United States – these 2 things can be more of a concept than truths and realities in which we have an emotional connection and passion.

We are so blessed to live in a nation where our system of justice is certainly not perfect, but it is the best the world has ever known because it is designed for justice to be equally applied to each person – not just a select few.

In a fractured society – a polarized society like ours in which every disagreement is couched in moral terms – it seems like justice and righteous things are less common.

But those who have truly suffered under unjust laws – unjust authorities – unrighteous and wicked people in power

whether they be bosses at work, upper classman at school, police or legal authorities or those in political power abusing their power and privilege for themselves, their friends, and their allies – they have a greater appreciation for – and a greater understanding of the blessing of justice and righteous leaders and a society that aspires to these values.

Those who have lived under the oppression and abuse of injustice know how exceedingly precious and priceless righteousness and justice truly are!

So, when we speak of God being righteous and just we need to realize how important and precious these attributes / perfections are to our faith.

Definition:

“God’s righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the final standard of what is right.”

(Systematic Theology, by Wayne Grudem, p. 203)

We can trust what the Bible says because God is just and righteous.

So many of God’s attributes feed into our trust of Scripture.

God’s omniscience / omnisapience / omnipotence / truthfulness and faithfulness.

He knows what has happened – what will happen...

His wisdom informs and guides the truth in the Bible...

His power ensures He can do what He said.

In addition, because God is just – because He is righteous – we can trust what He has written in the Bible.

Since He is righteous, we can trust He has spoken the truth in the Bible.

Isaiah 45:19

“I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, ‘Seek Me in vain.’ I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.”

We can trust that His Spirit inspired the human writers to record only what is right – true – what is accurate to history – and what is necessary for us to know for salvation and life.

Psalm 19:8

“...the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes...”

We don’t believe, trust, and have confidence in the Bible because people we know say it’s worthy of our trust.

We don’t have a high view of Scripture because of Church tradition.

We have a high view of Scripture, and we trust what it says, because God is the ultimate author – and He is just – and righteous in all He does.

God is just and righteous in His judgment of sin.

We're going to camp out here for a while because our culture (and some Christians) has a very difficult time harmonizing the love of God with His holiness and the justice holiness requires.

They believe the cross is all about the love of God.

They don't include the holiness, justice, and judgment of God into their thinking about the cross.

For many, the cross is simply about the love of God, but it's not about atonement for sin.

In their mind, love and judgment have no connection.

But the Bible tells a different story about the cross.

Part of that story certainly tells of God's love for us, and the greatest evidence of that love was in sending Jesus to the cross on our behalf.

Romans 5:8

"...but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Love was the motivation, but there were other issues that were addressed on the cross – mainly our sin.

God is holy – and He cannot be in the presence of sin.

So, our sin severs our fellowship with God.

But God loves us, and He wants to have a relationship with us – so He has to deal with our sin before we can have this relationship.

Since He is holy – and just – and righteous – He can't simply look the other way – He can't ignore our sin.

We understand this reality both in our family life – and in our society.

Family: As parents, you love your kids more than anyone else does.

When your little angels do something wrong – when they disobey what you told them to do / not do – you can do 1 of 2 things:

- Ignore their disobedience / rebellion
- Punish / discipline their disobedience

Society: As a society, we have laws which help protect people from wrongdoing. When someone breaks the law, we can do 1 of 2 things:

- Ignore their law breaking / criminal behavior. We can be overly lenient by the penalty decided by the courts.
- We can hold people accountable for their crimes and make sure the courts have penalties which are appropriate for the severity of the crimes committed.

The same is true for God.

The justice and righteousness we have in society is a reflection of the nature of God.

He is just and righteous.

He created us with a desire for a just and righteous society.

This is why the Apostle Paul, in **Romans 13** says:

Romans 13:4

“But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he (civic / governmental authorities) does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.”

Back to the cross...

The cross is the greatest expression of God’s love, but it’s also the greatest expression of His justice, mercy, and grace.

The breaking of God’s law – divine law, requires divine wrath and judgment.

If God ignored our sin because of His love for us, He would violate His holiness. He would no longer be just and righteous as He would be polluted by injustice and unrighteousness.

Sin can’t be ignored – it must be judged – it must be punished. A proper penalty must be paid.

This is what happened on the cross.

Jesus – due to His love for us – paid the price for our sin by His death.

Isaiah writes that “...He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement

that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed...the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6)

Some of the N.T. writers refer to this as *‘propitiation’* – the satisfaction of God’s wrath against sin – that Jesus satisfied the penalty for our sin by becoming the object of God’s wrath against sin as He took our sins upon Himself.

Romans 3:25-26

“...whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

The righteousness and justice of God is most visible in the incarnation and death of Jesus.

The cross is a picture of God’s love – but equally a picture of His justice and righteousness.

We also know God is just and righteous in His judgment of sin because He is always fair in His judgment.

His judgement is always in perfect proportion to the severity of the sin.

He always judges those who are guilty.

Genesis 18:25

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be

that from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

God is never heavy-handed – or mistaken in His judgment.

This can be a challenge to us sometimes.

Some see the judgments of God in the O.T. and they struggle seeing justice in them.

Book: “Is God a Moral Monster?”

They seem overly harsh – they seem like God’s temper was out of control.

Paul discusses this in **Romans 9-11**.

Romans 9:20-21

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?”

We have no right to challenge God’s righteousness and justice.

When we struggle seeing justice and righteousness in what God does, it’s important to remind ourselves:

1. We don’t have the full story.

Even if we know all the facts – we don’t know the heart – the inner motives involved.

2. We are not holy in our essence, so we underestimate the severity of sin.

So, God's judgment can seem overly harsh – because we are seeing it through unholy eyes – not from the perspective of our holy God.

Job was trying to work through this issue – trying to align what God allowed Satan to do to him with the justice and righteousness of God.

He was questioning of God – and then God replies to Job's subtle accusations of injustice.

In His reply, God does not give Job a detailed explanation of why He did what He did – or why He allowed what He allowed to occur in Job's life.

He answers Job's indirect accusation by declaring His power – His control over all creation – that He is the creator of all things, and He is sovereign over all things in creation.

God's concern is not that Job understands His actions – but that Job understand the majesty and power of God.

We may struggle understanding God's justice and righteousness in His judgment, but we need to remind ourselves that He is God – we are not – we are His creation.

One author said it this way.

“...there is a day coming, when God will set all the rings right; He will do every man justice; He will crown the righteous and

condemn the wicked... If God be a just God, He will take vengeance.

God has given men a law to live by, and they break it. There must be a day for the execution of offenders. A law not executed is but like a wooden dagger, for a show.

At the last day, God's sword shall be drawn out against offenders; then His justice shall be revealed before all the world...

The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath, but not sip one drop of injustice. At that day shall all mouths be stopped, and God's justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils (complaints) and clamors of unjust men.”

(God Is, by Mark Jones, quoting Thomas Watson, p. 191)

God is just and righteous when He rewards good works.

There are 2 forms of justice.

One is retributive – which is justice that repays the wicked with the penalty they deserve.

That is the justice we just finished discussing.

The other form of justice is ***remunerative*** – which is justice that rewards those who do good.

1 Samuel 26:23

“The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness...”

God's judgment is not only for sin – but also to reward the good works of believers.

1 Corinthians 3:13-14

“...on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.”

The Bible speaks of believers receiving crowns for their good works – for their obedience – for faithfulness – and for suffering and persecution due to their faith (See: 2

Timothy 2:5, 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10).

I believe we will receive these rewards after the Rapture of the Church – during the Tribulation period on Earth.

In the last chapter of the Bible, Jesus tells us:

Revelation 22:12

“Look, I am coming soon, bringing My reward with Me to repay all people according to their deeds.”

The N.T. teaching on rewards is an extension of God's justice and righteousness.

He rewards good – and punishes evil.

It's doubtful these rewards are material things.

They are likely something that symbolizes our obedience and good works – or they are rewards

regarding our work in heaven – our responsibility may be expanded in eternity because of our obedience in this life. (e.g., Parable of the talents, Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27)

Apply it... So What?

I believe there are a few ways we can apply the justice and righteousness of God in this life.

2 things which impact our worship.

1. Be thankful God is all-powerful – and righteous and just.

Thanksgiving is Thursday – so this is fitting.

But this should be something we think about and are thankful for beyond the holiday.

Think about God – and His attributes.

Remember, His attributes guide His actions – what He does through history – and in the future.

If God was righteous – but not omnipotent...

He would be unable to secure righteousness and justice.

If He was omnipotent – but unrighteous...

His actions and non-actions would be horrific and the source of great suffering for the entire world.

But He is both – righteous and omnipotent.

He has the power to do what He wants.

Since He is just and righteous, His desire is for good – what is right – and He has the power to make His will the reality of history.

Deuteronomy 32:4

“The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice.

A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.”

As we pray – as we sing songs of praise – as we give our life to Him each day – we can be thankful and joyful – that God is just and righteous in all things.

2. We worship God because of His justice and righteousness.

Since God loves us – and desires a relationship with us – He became incarnate – in flesh – so He could go to the cross and take the full wrath of God against our sin – upon Himself.

His justice demanded payment for sin.

Because He is righteous, He lived a sinless life, making Him the only – and perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

In Christ – in the cross – we see the holiness of God, the grace and mercy of God intertwined with His justice and righteousness.

“At the cross, (God’s) justice and mercy kiss.”

(None Greater, by Matthew Barrett, p. 226)

Romans 3:26b

“...He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

God doesn't wink at our sin.

He doesn't sweep it under the rug.

He judges our sin – and He pours out His wrathful judgment on His Son – who took our place.

Jesus died the death we deserve – and gave us eternal life, which we don't deserve.

He did this not only by His grace.

He did this because HE is just – and righteous.

Close in prayer