

Series: **Aliens 2.0**
Today's Title: "**Social Justice**"
November 28, 2021 – *Selected passages*

Objective: To help people know what the Bible says about the current social justice movement.

Opening prayer

Today is our final sermon in this short series, Aliens 2.0. Next Sunday is December 5 - communion Sunday - and through the month of December we'll focus on the birth of Christ and the lessons we can take away from the birth narratives.

Today we're looking at the topic of Social Justice. This is one of the issues that has divided our nation in recent years - and it has also divided churches - divided Christians. Let's begin by discussing:

The importance of justice.

Justice is one of our American values.

"...with liberty, and justice, for all."

Merriam Webster definition of Justice:

'The maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments.'

Justice demands a just and impartial decision to a conflict or criminal action.

Justice is an equalizer - protecting the weak from the strong - protecting people from cruel, illegal, and abusive treatment.

Justice applies to the poor as well as the rich - the educated and the uneducated. It applies to all skin colors - It applies to men and women.

In our nation, our justice system is where justice is decided.

We don't decide justice by popular vote, by mob rule, or by what celebrities and media talking heads tweet.

We have laws - passed by those we have elected - and we have judges and juries who make judgments in a court of law according to the laws of our nation - where certain rules of evidence and testimony are enforced - to help us arrive at a just verdict.

No system in this world is perfect, and our system has some problems. But the American system of justice has been viewed as the best in the world - because one of the primary values of our justice system is that it's supposed to be impartial.

This is why Lady Justice - the symbol of our justice system - wears a blindfold and has scales - so the evidence can be weighed - and the weightier evidence prevails. Her blindfold symbolizes the impartial nature of the system.

Our society depends on the justice system being just - making judgments based on the law, the evidence presented, and the impartiality of the judgment.

In our system, the merits of the case and the rule of law are supposed to be the deciding factors.

Our justice system - like every other aspect of our society - has become politicized, which means it is also polarizing.

Instead of evidence and the rule of law being the deciding factors - ideology and political power seem to pollute the waters of justice.

We've seen this playing out on our TVs over the past weeks with prominent trials which are commented on by people in the media who disregard the evidence to advance an agenda or ideology, and by protestors who demand revenge, not justice.

If our society loses justice - if we become an unjust society and our courts are no longer able to mete out just decisions, we will become a society where **anarchy** reigns.

We will become a society where those in power determine what is right - what is allowed - who has a voice - who must be silenced.

Justice is vitally important for our society - and for any society.

What is Social Justice?

Some might think Social Justice means something like:
‘Treating people equitably, working for systems and structures that are fair, looking out for the weak and the vulnerable, making sure nobody takes advantage of them or abuses their position of power and authority.’

But this is not what Social Justice is about.
In reality, what I just described is ‘Justice’.

Ask yourself this question.

Why does justice need a qualifier?

Is justice lacking something by itself?

Why add ‘social’ to it?

From the United Nations:

“Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth.”

(Source: United Nations - Social Justice in an Open World, The Role of the United Nations, The International Forum for Social Development <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ifsd/SocialJustice.pdf> p. 7)

So, according to the U.N., Social Justice is not something related to the Justice System - but in this description, it’s related to economics - to money.

Like Wokeism, CRT, Intersectionality - Social Justice has its basis in Marxist beliefs - which puts people in groups, and individualism is lost.

In economics, Marxism believes in taking from those who it sees as the oppressors - and giving it to those who are oppressed.

Social Justice applies those same ideas and philosophies to the sociological aspects of a culture.

Social Justice puts people in categories or groups - sees some as the oppressors and others as the oppressed - and seeks to even out the score.

In the Social Justice economy, people are lumped into groups - and your innocence or guilt - whether you're good or bad - is decided by the perceived merits of the group you are in.

The individual person's actions are not the most important factor. What group they are in is.

So, in this philosophy / worldview, a person's ethnic group, economic group, gender group, or sexual orientation group makes a person good or bad.

This is a massive contrast with Christianity.

Christianity holds the individual responsible for their actions - not the actions of a group they happen to be categorized in.

Christianity does not place guilt on a person because some in their group commit evil.

Voddie Baucham (Dean of theology, pastor, author) gives a definition of social justice: “*It is the state re-distribution of advantages and resources to disadvantaged groups to satisfy their right to social and economic equality.*”

[\(https://statementonsocialjustice.com/videos/defining-social-justice/\)](https://statementonsocialjustice.com/videos/defining-social-justice/)

So, what many people mean when they talk about ‘social justice’ is actually *equality of outcome*. Not equal opportunity or equal treatment under the law, but *equality of outcome*.

The terminology used is not equality - but equity.

Equity refers to the equal outcomes - not equal opportunity.

Social Justice sounds good - we like and value justice - and we want justice to be something for our social order - for everyone in society.

But that’s not what Social Justice is about.

It’s about punishing those who have - those who are determined to have benefited from social positions of the past - those who are ‘privileged’.

Social Justice is about taking from those with privilege and giving to those deemed without.

I want to drill down on something here to help us all understand an important distinction and difference of what has happened over the past decades.

The Social Gospel movement has been a movement that started around 1870. It started because of the terrible

conditions many people were living in as the Industrial Age hit its full stride.

In the United States, in the 1930's, the Social Gospel movement gained traction and was instrumental in passing laws abolishing child labor, establishing a shorter workweek, a living wage, safety regulations in factories, women's right to vote, among other things.

All good things. Reforms that were helpful and good.

Largely, the Social Gospel movement wanted to improve the social conditions of those in the lower sectors of society.

The Social Gospel movement believed in a Christianized society where the influence and values of the Church would benefit society as a whole.

It was in this time that the Salvation Army was born. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, believed the Gospel should motivate Christians to help those in need and who were suffering in life, so:

“He proposed to remedy pauperism and vice by means of: homes for the homeless; training centers to prepare emigrants for oversea colonies; rescue homes for fallen women; homes for released prisoners; legal aid for the poor; and practical help for the alcoholic.”

(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Booth>)

The theology of the Social Gospel movement was lacking, and Marxist thought influenced many in the movement as they categorized people in groups and believed Capitalism was an un-Christian system and the state should control more for more equal distribution.

The long-term problem with the Social Gospel movement is that improving society replaced the Gospel as the movement's priority.

It began to downplay the spiritual poverty of men and women and elevated their physical poverty and other temporal difficulties and disadvantages - to the point that the Gospel was set aside and is now largely ignored by many in the movement.

Even though there is some overlap with Social Gospel and Social Justice - there is a massive difference.

I think most Christians hear 'Social Justice' and they think in terms of the 'Social Gospel'.

They think of doing things which help people and right the wrongs in society.

The massive difference is hate - revenge - condemnation and guilt.

Social Justice is more about hate and revenge toward those in society who are well off - and condemnation and guilt toward those who are in groups identified as the oppressors.

The Social Gospel movement was rooted in compassion for alleviating the ills of life in the industrial world, and, at least in the beginning and in the world of the Salvation Army, the goal was to alleviate or lessen human suffering so the person could learn about the Gospel on a full stomach.

Social Justice is not rooted in compassion.

Social Justice seeks to get revenge - to even the score - it offers no salvation - only continual repentance and penance.

What does the Bible say about Social Justice?

There are 8 primary Justice passages in the Bible:

Isaiah 1; Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 22; Amos 5; Micah 6:8;
Luke 4/Isaiah 61; Matthew 25

There are more passages that speak to justice - but these are the primary ones.

The Bible has a lot to say about justice - which we would expect since God is just.

And it has a lot to say about Social Justice.

God demands *justice*.

Justice means following the rule of law - equal treatment under the law - impartiality of the law - paying what you promised to pay - not stealing - not

swindling - not taking bribes or taking advantage of the weak and vulnerable.”

(Article: "Is Social Justice a Gospel Issue?" by Kevin DeYoung, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/social-justice-gospel-issue/>)

Justice is one of the attributes of God - He is just.

A just God dispenses justice.

God is just in how He deals with all people.

The Bible is clear that God is just.

Acts 10:34

“God shows no partiality”

Psalm 89:14

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne...”

Isaiah 61:8

“For I the LORD love justice; I hate robbery and wrong...”

The Bible is clear that God demands His people apply justice in their life.

Micah 6:8

“what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness...”

Leviticus 19:15

“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”

Exodus 23:3 (NLT)

“And do not slant your testimony in favor of a person just because that person is poor.”

James 2:9

“But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”

Notice, in 2 of these verses, that justice is equally applied to the poor person as well as the wealthy person.

Justice is impartial regarding wealth - or lack of wealth.

This is vitally important.

Since we are God's possession - we have been purchased with the blood of His Son, Jesus - we need to treat others justly - fairly - because He is just - and we are extensions of God in this life.

He commands that we value justice - and never fail to be just toward others.

Especially those who are on another rung of the social ladder - either above or below us.

If we treat people unfairly - if we advance injustice - we are placing ourselves under God's judgment.

We are "convicted by the law as transgressors".

God demands love.

Matthew 22:35-40

"And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test Him. Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

And Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Love. Love God...Love People.

One of the problems of the evangelical church over the past decades is many churches sinned by ignoring what Jesus said. Christians focused on 'Loving God' by focusing on theology, church-life, church-health, church events, church services, church budgets and programs. For a number of decades Christianity / churches focused on church stuff - and neglected (*intentionally or not*) the command to love our neighbors - to love people in our community.

As a result, the church became isolated from the culture in ways God never intended, and instead of Christians demonstrating the love of Christ by caring for the poor, the marginalized, the widows, and orphans, others have stepped into that space.

Compassion, caring...love - is not what the church is known for in today's culture.

We're supposed to be known by these things, but we're not.

'Truth and grace' - Jesus was full of both.

Should Christians / the church - be involved with social causes...working to alleviate social suffering and inequalities? YES!!!!

"It is a fact that the Bible puts enormous stress on the charitable aspects of justice - goodwill toward all;

compassion for the underprivileged; assistance for the fatherless and the widow; love for foreigners; and care for the poor, especially providing needy people with the necessities of life (Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 140:12; Ezekiel 22:29). ”

(<https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180907>)

Social justice is the opposite of love. It claims to be loving and compassionate, but it's not.

Love “...keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.”

(1 Corinthians 13:5-6)

Jesus said, “turn the other cheek” ... “love your enemies” ... “pray for those who persecute / mistreat you”.

Social justice highlights the wrongs of the past and uses that ‘record’ as it's justification...motivation.

It's accepted - culturally approved revenge - evening the score...in the minds of some.

Reacting to injustice, with another form of injustice (vigilantism, mob justice), is not justice.

Anger and outrage which leads to revenge is not justice.

Apply it...

All Christians are unified in Christ.

Galatians 3:26-29

“...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on
Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor
free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ
Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring,
heirs according to promise.”

The Christian's identity is not in their differences, it's
not in what separates and divides us, but in Christ.

Christ unifies us.

Christianity puts everyone who believes into 1
category - 1 group: 'In Christ'.

Galatians 3:26-29 makes that explicitly clear.

Believers are all equally and fully holy and righteous
because of Jesus.

Social Justice divides - it doesn't unify.

Social Justice divides people by race, ethnicity, and
gender.

It divides by believing groups of people are guilty of
sin simply because of their group identity - not
because they personally committed the sins.

It believes people are racist due to the color of their
skin - or misogynistic because of their gender.

Social Justice teaches that we need more than Jesus to
deal with our sin, our mistreatment of others, our
salvation, and our reconciliation with each other.

It teaches we need to follow what the Sociologists say, what Critical Theory says, what post-modern philosophies teach - to get what we really need to fix our problems and right all the wrongs.

But the Bible has a different - radically different message.

Know God's truth so you can identify false teaching and false hopes of this world.

It can be exhausting to be on guard.

It can be exhausting to discern everything we see and hear and compare it with God's truth.

But that's what we're called to do.

That's what we need to do.

We have so many messages coming at us each day.

You can't afford to let your mental and intellectual guard down.

We must know what the Bible says on these issues, so we can discern their merit.

Colossians 2:8

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

1 Timothy 6:3-4, 20-21

“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that

accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions,

20 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"

21 for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.”

We look to Christ - and Christ only - for our forgiveness - for our redemption - for our reconciliation.

We look to Christ for our identity - not our skin color or bank account.

We live in the information age.

Our world is full of information - data - philosophies - views - opinions - beliefs.

We need to understand there are many false teachings / false beliefs / false doctrines that we are exposed to.

We need to know the truth of God’s Word - the truth of the Gospel - so we can spot these false ideologies and hold up the truth and grace of Christ.

Close in prayer

Transition to Advent

Resources on Social Justice:

<https://statementonsocialjustice.com>

<https://www.str.org/w/the-legend-of-the-social-justice-jesus>