

The Great Commandment 7: Justice and Restoration

Introduction

The way we view justice is just a shadow of the standard at which Jesus expects us to live. We often think of justice in terms of retribution or punishment. Sometimes we measure justice through the decisions made in a court of law or the United States Constitution. Yet the standard for justice, a word that means to make things right, is nothing less than the great commandment itself.

Discussion Questions

1. What does justice mean to you? What is a Jesus follower's role when it comes to justice for people and societies? If I insisted that Jesus' standard for justice was the great commandment, to restore people to loving God and others, how does this change how you approach your beliefs? Your politics?
2. Talk about our current world events. We have the murder of an innocent man, national upheaval as a response to systemic racism. We have people hurting and dying and crying out for justice. Set aside all the complexities for a moment and ask yourself, how should we respond if the only guide we use is the great commandment?
3. Read Luke 4:16-21. Reading this passage is how Jesus starts his ministry. This is the gospel, the good news. Jesus seeks to make things right. He seeks justice. Looking at these words, how are we engaging this kind of justice as a church well? Where could we do better? How does this apply to the current issues our country is facing?
4. Read Matthew 5:1-12. Through the Beatitudes Jesus delves deeper into what justice looks like. Making things right is so central to his mission, and that rightness comes by restoring people to love of God and loving others. What barriers are in the way in your heart when it comes to loving and restoring others? Fear? Prejudice? Politics? Are any of them a good enough excuse to write off anyone that Jesus loves?
5. Read Matthew 25:31-46. It seems clear that Christians are identified by their engagement in the great commandment, their pursuit of real justice. Discuss this verse and its implication.
6. How do we engage in justice and restoration for the millions of people hurting right now? Most of us don't have experience or understanding of these heartbreaking issues, but we must have the conversation? What are next steps?