

Social Justice- Who is My Neighbor?

In a very broad definition "social justice reflects the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society".

In our context Social Justice is very much about living our lives in such a way that the love and grace of God is manifested in our everyday lives to people at every level of society.

It can be further defined as working towards the realization of a world where all members of a society, regardless of background, have an equal opportunity to experience the benefits and reality of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

This takes place through reflecting the love of Christ in tangible ways and living our lives doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God

It is too often, that in some ways, the world reflects this more than the church does.

Why is it that for many of us we seem to function is a sort of selective obedience to God?

I think in many cases the lack of Social Justice is so much an accepted part of church culture and our religious mindset that we don't even realize our level of inaction.

Maybe our life with God has become so rigid or managed that we have removed any risk or adventure out of being a follower of Jesus.

"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."
- Edmund Burke

One of the great stories of Social Justice in the Bible is the story of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37 (NLT) One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" **26** Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" **27** The man answered, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" **28** "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" **29** The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" **30** Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. **31** "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying

there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. **32** A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. **33** “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. **34** Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. **35** The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’ **36** “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked. **37** The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

Luke 10:25-37 (NLT) One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?” **26** Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?” **27** The man answered, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” **28** “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

“‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”
Everything as it relates to social justice and loving others flows out of our love relationship with Jesus

There are responsibilities for believers that when assumed and lived out; glorify God, represent Him accurately to the world, extending His love and compassion to them through us.

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (v 29)

Who is our neighbor?

He wanted to justify his actions or inactions – allowing himself to feel he had met his obligation.

Why is that such a prevalent part of our human nature?

Jesus replied with a story that would demonstrate the contrast.

30 Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. **31** “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he

crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. **32** A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. **33** “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. **34** Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. **35** The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’ **36** “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked. **37** The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

“By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by.

A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

What causes this type of inaction from the people who should be the most proactive?

In this story, the lawyer who asked this question was seeking to identify himself as loving his neighbor but in Jesus story he was not being identified as the helpful neighbor but as the priest or the temple assistant.

They may have thought they were justified by it but they were actually ignoring the Old Testament law

A Priest and a Levite are mentioned here, partly because they were some of the most frequent travelers on this road, and partly to show that these were the persons who, from the nature of their office, were most obligated to perform works of mercy; and from whom a person in distress had a right to expect immediate assistance and comfort; and their inhuman conduct here was a flat breach of the law.

Deuteronomy 22:1-4 (NLT) “If you see your neighbor’s ox or sheep or goat wandering away, don’t ignore your responsibility. Take it back to its owner. **2** If its owner does not live nearby or you don’t know who the owner is, take it to your place and keep it until the owner comes looking for it. Then you must return it. **3** Do the same if you find your neighbor’s donkey, clothing, or anything else your neighbor loses. Don’t ignore your responsibility. **4** “If you see that your neighbor’s donkey or ox has collapsed on the road, do not look the other way. Go and help your neighbor get it back on its feet!

Exodus 23:4-5 (NLT) “If you come upon your enemy’s ox or donkey that has strayed away, take it back to its owner. **5** If you see that the donkey of someone who hates you has collapsed under its load, do not walk by. Instead, stop and help.

Isaiah 58:7 (NLT) Share your food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

This lawyer expected Jesus to tell him that his fellow Jews was his neighbor; instead, the Lord tells him that he ought to be a neighbor to any man and every man in need.

“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him.

The Samaritans were the most hardened enemies of the Jews. They had no dealings with each other. It was this fact which rendered the conduct of this man so striking, and which was set in strong contrast with the conduct of the priest and the Levite.

They would not help their own afflicted and wounded countryman. He, who could not be expected to aid a Jew, overcame all the usual hostility between the people; saw the wounded man as a neighbor, a brother, one who needed aid; and kindly denied himself to show kindness to the stranger.

Going over to him,

- The Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them.
- Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.
- The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

Two silver coins is about two days wages

36 “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked. **37** The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

Social Justice is not replacing or compromising the Gospel with a Social Gospel, Social Justice is part of the Gospel

As we discussed last week, application is everything

James 2:14-18 ,20 (NLT) What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? **15** Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, **16** and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

¹⁷ So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. ¹⁸ Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

20 How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?