

**The Justice of God**  
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This month we are studying some of the attributes of God. Last week we talked about his self sufficiency. Needs nothing. Not even us which means, among other things, he has no motive to use us. He simply loves us.

I suggested that one reason we ought to study his nature and character is that we *need* to see God as he is so we can treasure him accordingly and evaluate everything else in light of his superlative greatness. We need a consuming passion that will define our lives and make it easy, or at least possible, for us to say no to worthless competing passions. Only God, the real God, is ultimately worthy of that place in our lives because only he is mind bogglingly, unimaginably, fantastically great.

And there are other reasons too, that it's important that we study who he is. To illustrate one, I'd like to show you a clip from the TV show ER. In this scene a dying, guilt-ridden man is speaking with a chaplain. He wants to know the truth about God. Take a look.

[SLIDE] ER clip

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I need answers. I need someone who will look me in the eye and tell me how to find forgiveness because I am running out of time.

The questions that man is asking all flow directly from questions about the character and nature of God.

Is he just, or is he forgiving. How can he be both? What does he require? If he makes a promise will he keep it? How can we be sure? Is he angry? Does he love us? What is he like? Really like?

You need to know the answers to those questions. So each week this month we are looking at one aspect of God's nature and character, one attribute of his. We haven't the time to be anything close to comprehensive, but I hope to spur you on to your own study of the Scriptures, so you can come to a clearer picture of what God is like.

Those two reasons- our need for **supreme beauty, and our need for solid answers**- are particularly on my mind as we look at this morning's topic, namely the justice of God.

**Justice is so beautiful**, so magnificent, so consistent with what we long for that when we see it we delight in it. Justice is one of those things that compels worship. And so to meditate on the justice of God is to feed our soul in a way that empowers us to say no to lesser things.

**But we also need to dwell on God's justice because we need solid answers.** The world is so full of injustice- so breathtakingly filled with pain- that we are tempted to believe at every turn that God is not just. When we believe that, when we abandon belief in the justice of God, the only outcome is despair. If the ultimate judge, the final court of appeal is corrupt, then there is no hope. So to think on and become convinced of the justice of God- is a bulwark against hopelessness to which a broken world makes us susceptible.

Some of you, bless your heart, don't know what I'm talking about. I didn't either when I was younger. I grew up in Disneyland. Life was good and easy pretty much all the time. In the happy protected cove in which I swam life was sweet. If you are in a similar cove, insulated from the evil that plagues the world, that's awesome. Enjoy it. But, if the storms have entered your cove, or if you have ever lifted your eyes towards the deeper water to see the world of suffering outside your personal sanctuary you might know the world is filled with pain and injustice.

So here's where we're going this morning. We're going to talk about:

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**Justice loved by God.  
Justice lost in the world  
Justice labored for by God's people**

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**First, Justice loved by God.**

Justice, I don't mean wrath. Rather a preference for, love of, insistence upon things being the way they are supposed to be.

God loves wholeness, righteousness. He loves what the Hebrews called "shalom" We translate shalom as peace, but it means a lot more than that. Shalom is wholeness and health. It's when everything is the way things are supposed to be. It's absence of poverty and loss and oppression. It's when the fabric of life, or the fabric of a life, is strong. It's intact families, and purity, and love.

God is just and he wants a world filled with Shalom.

Turn in your bibles to Isaiah 61. Listen to God describing what his Messiah will do:

Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

Isaiah 61:8

“For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them.

Jesus quoted that passages and applied it to himself. He said this is why he came. To produce that.

God loves wholeness, justice, shalom. He loves peace and justice for his people. And he does so because justice is fundamental to who he is. AW Tozier said this:

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*It is sometimes said, “Justice requires God to do this,” referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle. If there were it would be superior to God, for only a superior power can compel obedience. The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree. All God's reasons come from within His uncreated being. Nothing has entered the being of God from eternity, nothing has been removed, nothing has been changed.*

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*Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more; and when God acts justly he is not doing so to conform to an independent*

*critterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation. Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so. God is His own self-existent principle of moral equity, and when He sentences evil men or rewards the righteous, He simply acts like Himself from within, uninfluenced by anything, that is not Himself.*

He doesn't just act justly; he is justice. Because he loves his own perfections supremely he loves justice. He loves shalom. He loves wholeness. God loves justice in the external world, because he loves justice in himself.

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### **Justice lost in the world**

And yet, despite God's love of justice, justice is lost in the world.

For those of you who are a little more sensitive to this, when you look around the world what pains grip you? What evil makes you grasp your head in wonder?

War, orphans (130M), poverty, prostitution, slavery.

Stats from sheet.

Sex traffic

Global orphan crisis

Abortion 42 M per year 1.37 million in US

In addition to all his, livelihoods lost in the gulf because of BP oil spill, personal tragedies in your world.

Injustice is when the fabric of life wears thin. Shalom is broken when some charlatan sells a widow some insurance policy that she doesn't need. Shalom is broken when we label our water fountains white and colored. It's broken when there are 130 Million children without parents.

Some of you perhaps have wondered- maybe even questioned everything - because you can't figure out how a good God, a just God could stay seated on his throne while this happens?

God is just and he loves justice. But the world is unjust. So, what do we do with that? What's the plan?

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### **Justice labored for by God's people**

Here's the plan: The people of God, the people he loves, the people he has redeemed, the broken people who's own personal shalom has been lost and restored. We are to labor for justice, for the restoration of other peoples shalom. It's all over scripture: Broken people who's shalom has been restored are ambassadors to restore shalom in a broken world.

This is Micah 6:8

*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

Or there's Proverbs 24:11, 12

*Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. 12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?*

Or proverbs 3:27

*Pr 3:27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.*

Or how about Isaiah 1:17

*Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.*

Over and over he invites us to restore justice.

God is just, so he loves justice.

But the world is broken and has lost justice

We who have experienced his love, we are to labor for justice.

I'd like you all to listen to a song. It's by Sarah Groves and is called When the saints.

I think it's beautiful. It's about the burden of living in an unjust world that desperately needs what only we can give. Lyrics on screen.

**[SLIDE] Song**

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Does that resonate with you? It sure does me. I want to be part of this great movement of God through the ages that has fought slavery, loved the poor, advanced justice and carried the gospel. Those of you who volunteered yesterday with the Special Olympics did so in this spirit. That was a shalom restoring event.

It has to be us that do this work. The injustice in the world is here for the Christians to solve. This is important so give me 5 more minutes and I'll try to be brief and clear on this.

We who have been loved unconditionally have the strongest motive of anyone to go after the **symptoms** of injustice in the world.

Why would anyone care for the little girls in brothels of South East Asia whom they've never met? Or for the millions don't have clean water? Or for the 130 Million orphans? Or those being trafficked right here in the US?

Really why would you take the money you've been saving for a blu-ray player and instead give it to an organization that fights for justice? Why would anyone do that?

Or why would you leave your lucrative job and comfortable life so you can spend the next year in Botswana working with orphans?

Why would you do that? You wouldn't. Unless, of course someone had cared about you when you were desperate for help. If you've ever needed to be rescued then met a savior, well that would change everything. Having received mercy you naturally want to extend mercy.

Jesus, though he was rich, for your sake became poor, that you through his poverty, might become rich. Some of you have experienced that kind of love and it flipped your life upside down. And now you are ruined for anything less than being an ambassador of love and justice and mercy.

We who have been loved unconditionally have the strongest motives of anyone to go after the **symptoms** of injustice in the world.

And we who possess the gospel have the only thing that works at fixing the **disease** behind the injustice in the world.

Around Christmas an article came out in the London Times that I'd like to share with you. It was written by Matthew Parris who spent his childhood in Africa. He's not a Christian, in fact he's an atheist. He was recently visiting back in

Africa observing work done to provide clean water in villages across the continent. He wrote this piece to share the lesson he learned while there. I'd like read you a lengthy excerpt, five screens worth. Do your best to attend to what he says here and then we'll be done. I'll have several copies of the full article at the table out front if you'd like one.

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Matthew Parris article.

We aren't there just treating the symptoms. We are there curing the disease. This man who does not believe in God cannot help but see that the gospel changes lives. And that a personal encounter with Jesus fixes the fundamental problem. Given his vantage point he has done a remarkable job making sense of what he's seen.

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Christians who know mercy have the motive to treat the symptoms of injustice. Christians who know Jesus have the power to cure the disease behind injustice.

Guys, the world is dying for the gospel. This is our hour. My prayer to God is that this church will send people out to a broken world and be his ambassadors of justice.

Put children in families, provide clean water, fight sex trafficking. But also bring a message of love and grace and forgiveness that fixes the real problem of women and men's estrangement from God. I pray that you will give your life to this.