

## Back To Basics

*Delighting in God's Justice and Mercy*

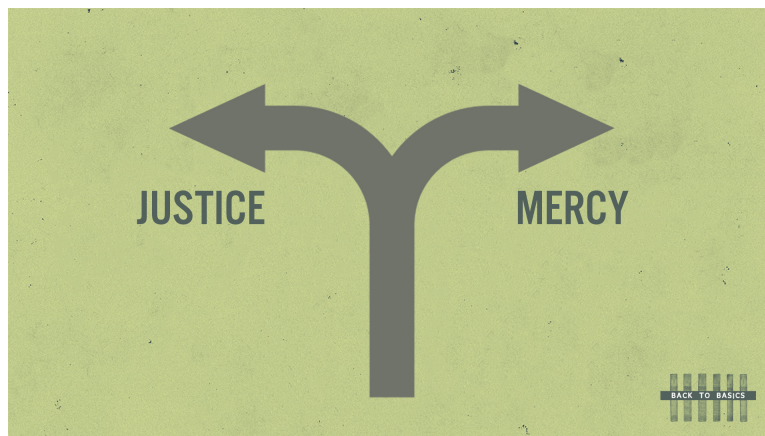
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## II. INTRO

What do you think of when I say the word justice? I think of a judge. I think of a courtroom setting where someone is about to get what they deserve. I think that these two ideas are at odds. On one side there is justice and judgment while on the other there is compassion and mercy.

When I think of justice and mercy, I think of something like this:



But really what the Bible teaches is something like this:



Justice and mercy operate alongside one another. This is no clearer seen than it is in the Gospel. John 3:16 says that God so LOVED (compassion and mercy) the world that He GAVE (justice)...

1. Justice is not us handing out God's judgment – God's judgment is part of His justice.
  - a. James 4:12 – “There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?” We do not determine the fate of our neighbors, nor do we have the ability to look straight to the heart.
  - b. Matthew 7:1-5 – “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”
  - c. We are nowhere near qualified to judge others because we are broken.
  - d. Judgment is a decision, and in eternal matters of the heart, the Bible is clear that it's a decision we are unqualified and incapable of making. So then what is justice?
2. Best definition – Adam Taylor from *World Vision* - Justice is, first and foremost, a relational term — people living in right relationship with God, one another, and the natural creation.
  - a. Seeking justice is a desire to see a flourishing of God's kingdom here on earth.
  - b. If kingdom flourishing (justice) is the fruit, then love and compassion (mercy) is the fuel.
3. So then what is seeking justice? I am not going to use this platform this morning to address any modern-day issues of justice. Whether that be political corruption, poverty, racial discrimination, the sanctity of human life, or foreign wars. Nor am I going to claim to have the answers to these issues, which is way I

need to hear what I'm about to share this morning more than any other person in this room.

### III. BODY

I want to take a look at a familiar text and story this morning. We're going to read the story of Zacchaeus, and we're going to see a story that I believe is a story of Gospel centered justice.

The Bible is explicit in commands to care for the poor and fatherless

- See 1 John 3:17 or Luke 3:11 or James 1:27

In Luke 4:18, just before the story we are about to read, Jesus states what I've heard some people describe as His job description:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

If that's Jesus' job description, then this next story is Him at work.

**Jesus meets injustice with mercy and the outcome is salvation.**

We'll be reading from Luke chapter 19 verses 1-10. That's page ### in the Bible's on your seats. Please, if you don't own a Bible at home we'd ask that you take this as our gift to you this morning.

Would you stand and read along with me...

<sup>1</sup> Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. <sup>2</sup> There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. <sup>3</sup> He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”

<sup>6</sup> Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. <sup>7</sup> But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.

<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man<sup>[a]</sup> came to seek and save those who are lost.”

1. The life and profession of Zacchaeus was one of social/economic injustice. He was a tax collector... a CHIEF tax collector, and wealthy one at that. He acquired wealth through corruption and exploitation of one of the wealthiest cities in the region, Jericho.
  - a. Theologian, William Barclay, writes that Jericho “had a great palm forest and world-famous balsam groves which perfumed the air for miles around. Its gardens of roses were known far and wide.
2. On the day that Jesus is passing through, Zacchaeus is straining to “see” Jesus. And he ends up welcoming Jesus into His home.
  - a. The text does make it a point to communicate how this invitation was perceived by the crowd.
  - b. Certainly, this was an uncommon, unaccepted, and awkward thing for Jesus to be doing.
3. Then the next this we read is that Zacchaeus is a changed man. No more corruption. Willing to right his wrongs. All for God’s glory. A repentant heart and salvation.

Jesus meets injustice with mercy and the outcome is salvation. Here we see justice and mercy working together.

What can we take from this...

**Jesus sees injustice.**

He looks up to find Zacchaeus.

**Jesus approaches injustice with (unpopular) mercy.**

He spends time with Zacchaeus despite the crowds remarks.

**Jesus brings about justice through salvation.**

Zacchaeus repents and vows to give to the poor and pay back those that he's cheated.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

I like this story because it shows that justice is needed for the oppressor and the oppressed. We could have also looked at the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10 where Jesus gives another example of uncommon and unpopular mercy and commands us to do the same.

Either way, it makes me realize that I do not seek justice. Maybe I don't think I have the power or authority to do so because I misunderstand it for judgment. Or maybe I just don't look up to see it.

1. David Platt – writes about “blind spots”
2. Asking God “what am I not seeing”

Because here's the one thing that God has pressed on my heart that I wanted to share with all of you. It may be hard to swallow at first, it was for me, but I believe it to be true.

**God cares more about seeing His kingdom flourish than He does for our worldly comfort and well-being.**

The more I wrestle with and come to grips with this thought, the more I am motivated to do something.

This may look like writing a letter to a government leader. This may look like confronting a government leader with the gospel.

This may look like bringing the gospel while volunteering at a soup kitchen.

This may look like bringing the gospel while visiting a local prison.

This may look like a living example of the gospel by becoming a foster parent.

I know that here at CCC, we want to start an outreach team to start to organize ways that we, as a church, can participate in seeing God's kingdom flourish.

Oikos

In the very least PRAY!

- That God would help us to see the need around us
- And that we'd response with gospel centered, unpopular love and mercy.