

CHAPTER 15: A SOCIETY FOR JUSTICE

GOSPEL READINGS: Luke 4:16–30; 6:20–26

McKnight defines *justice* for us in this way: “kingdom justice concerns restoring humans to both God and others.” The act of restoration reveals God’s desire to bring an end to sin’s destructive consequences (death, separation from God/others, etc). He describes further...

“In the Bible, justice (Hebrew, *tsedeqa* or *mishpat*) describes “making something right,” and for something to be “right,” there has to be a standard. For the Jewish world the standard is God’s will, the Torah, and so justice for Israel was to “make things right” according to Scripture... What is “right” is determined by the twin exhortation to love God (by following Jesus) and to love others (i.e. the *Jesus Creed*). For Jesus, justice is about restoring people and society to the love of God and love of others. This vision of restorative justice clobbers, with a padded stick of love, any retributive sense of justice.”

1. If it’s true that Jesus instructs his followers embrace a *restored* society of love for God and others... then what prevents this kingdom-society from becoming the “norm”?
2. Based on the Luke 4 & 6 readings, what is the vision Jesus has for his kingdom-society?
3. How does Jesus describe the reversal of the situation of the poor, hungry, grieving, and persecuted? (and that of the wealthy, satisfied, happy, and well-spoken)
 - a. When will we see these restorations take place?
 - b. How can we encourage these kingdom values in our world?
4. How is Israel’s treatment of true prophets (Luke 6:23) and false prophets (6:26) a picture of God’s justice?
 - a. Why do you think Jesus makes the comparison of those who suffer being like (true) prophets and those who are comfortable being like false prophets?

From Matthew’s beatitudes, Jesus proclaims “blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (6:6). Here Jesus communicates that God’s heart is about bringing wholeness again (ie. *justice*) to our wounded world. The implication is that kingdom-people should be *disturbed and moved to action* when we see others unable to experience the love of God or love of others.

5. Where do you experience such a “hunger and thirst for righteousness”? (Try not to list every injustice that moves you...but one issue that causes you to be moved in prayer, grief, and/or action.)
6. Understanding that not everyone will carry your particular burden, what can *you do*?
7. A “teaser” question for Chapter 16:
Imagine a world where this issue is completely resolved and those awaiting justice are restored. What does that look like for you? *Is this what Jesus has in mind for his kingdom?*

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