

Sermon Title: "Biblical Justice"

Introduction:

Aloha and good morning/evening!

We're continuing in our series titled "Stand Up, Stand Out." Over the past few weeks, Pastor Mark and Pastor Theresa have challenged us to live boldly in our faith. Do we compromise our beliefs to blend in with the world, or do we stand up and stand out, rooted in God's truth? Today, I want us to see how God's justice can impact not only our faith but also the world around us.

This is a vast topic, and today, we'll only scratch the surface. But I pray this time together won't just be a moment we dismiss afterward but a moment to seek the Lord and reflect on what He wants for each of us. Ready to dive in?

What is Justice?

At its core, justice means to set things right. Speaking of setting things right ...

The story is told of a pastor who decided to skip church one Sunday to play golf. He told his assistant he wasn't feeling well and asked them to cover for him. He then drove to a golf course far from home so no one would recognize him. But an angel, watching, asked God what to do. God said, "I got this."

The pastor excitedly reached the first hole, he teed up and swung his club. Suddenly, a huge gust of wind caught the ball, carried it an extra hundred yards, and dropped it right into the hole—a 450-yard hole-in-one! The pastor was thrilled, but the angel turned to God and said, "Why would you let him get away with that?"

God smiled and said, "Who's he going to tell?"

Now, that's making things right!

Justice is about making things right. We instinctively understand this concept— think about it. When someone is wronged say in a burglary, theft, or the like, what's your first instinct? That's right, to restore what was lost. But biblical justice goes much deeper. It's not just about fairness in the moment but about restoring people, communities, and the world to wholeness, both those in the wrong and those wronged according to God's design.

Imago Dei

But why do we feel this need for justice? It's because *we are made in the image of God* (Imago Dei). That's the key difference between the world's justice and biblical justice.

Because we bear God's image, the drive for justice—making things right—is alive in us. God's character is perfectly just, He cannot be unjust. As His followers, we are called to reflect that justice in how we live and treat others.

But we must remember that we live in a broken world. Even the best intentions can go awry without God. Human justice, often referred to as social justice, focuses on fairness and equality. While noble, it often deals with the symptoms rather than the root causes of injustice.

For instance, some social justice movements work toward equal opportunities, fighting systemic inequalities, and giving people what they deserve. But these efforts, while necessary, are often limited by political and social frameworks. They focus on outward actions without addressing the deeper, spiritual healing that true justice requires.

Micah 6:8 gives us a clear directive:

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.” He requires this. Because it is who He is. I never noticed the Word require before.

The world's justice can sometimes create division—*victims versus oppressors*—reinforcing conflict and division rather than bringing true healing. But biblical justice calls for restoration, rooted in God's nature, aims to uplift, restore relationships and communities.

Body:

1. The World's View of Justice

Social justice focuses on fairness, equal rights, and the redistribution of resources.

These are important, but they often focus on immediate solutions rather than long-term, lasting change. Some characteristics of social justice include:

- Equal rights and opportunities for all

- Addressing symptoms of injustice
- Appeals to specific people groups
- Seeks redistribution of resources to achieve equality
- Primarily about government and systems
- Can be retributive—people getting what they deserve

However, Scripture calls us to a higher standard. In *Isaiah 1:17*, God says: “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, and plead the widow's cause.”

This kind of justice is not about quick fixes but about caring deeply for the most vulnerable, working to change the systems that oppress others, and protecting those who cannot protect themselves.

2. Biblical Justice

Biblical justice starts with God's eternal perspective. It's not just about fairness in human terms but about what is right in God's eyes. It considers not only our earthly circumstances but also the condition of our hearts and eternal destiny. God's justice seeks to reconcile all things to Himself.

Unlike worldly justice, which often seeks to punish wrongdoers, biblical justice focuses on *restoration*. God's justice aims to restore both the wrongdoer and the one who has been wronged, offering compassion and mercy.

Our ultimate example of biblical justice is Jesus. Matthew 5:6 (NLT) says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice (righteousness), for they will be filled.”

3. Living Out Biblical Justice

Living out biblical justice means following Jesus' example. In *Matthew 25:31-46*, Jesus tells the parable of the final judgment, where He separates the sheep from the goats based on how they treated the vulnerable:

“For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink... Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.”

For us, this means:

- Protecting the vulnerable, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked
- Fighting against oppression and challenging unjust systems
- Walking alongside the wounded, offering care and love
- Most importantly, pointing people to Jesus, the ultimate source of justice

Testimony:

(Share the story of the person who experienced injustice at work, highlighting God's provision and restoration.)

As we reflect on Yom Kippur this week, we are reminded that justice and mercy go hand in hand. God's justice required payment for sin, but His mercy provided that payment through Jesus. Jesus made right what was wrong through His death and resurrection, and He continues to do so in our lives and the world.

Conclusion:

As followers of Jesus, we are called to live out God's justice. It's not just about righting wrongs; it's about restoring people to God. Biblical justice seeks healing, reconciliation, and eternal transformation.

As *Micah 6:8* reminds us:

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

Let's not just talk about justice—let's live it out, bringing God's love and healing into a broken world.

Let's pray.

Small group discussion questions:

1. *What is My View of Justice?*

How has your understanding of justice been shaped by society? How does this align

with or differ from the biblical definition of justice? Do you focus more on the symptoms of injustice rather than seeking to address its root causes?

2. *How Can I Stand for the Vulnerable?*

Reflect on who in your community might be marginalized or vulnerable. How can you practically live out God's call to protect the vulnerable, as Isaiah 1:17 commands, in your daily life?

3. *Am I Prioritizing Restorative Justice?*

Biblical justice is not about what is fair, it is about restoration. Consider a situation in your life where someone has wronged you or where you've wronged someone. How might God be calling you to pursue restoration rather than simply retribution?

4. *Am I Willing to Stand Out for Justice?*

Are there areas in your life where you have been tempted to blend in rather than stand out for God's justice? What small steps can you take to live more boldly?

5. *How Does God's Justice and Mercy Shape My Actions?*

Consider justice and mercy in your own heart. Do you lean more toward one than the other? How does Yom Kippur and the cross of Christ remind you that God's justice is deeply connected to His mercy? How can you reflect this balance in your interactions with others?

6. *Am I Pointing People to Jesus in My Fight for Justice?*

As we pursue justice, focusing solely on social or political solutions is easy. Biblical justice, however, always points people to Jesus. What are ways you ensure your work for justice also shines a light on the hope in Christ?