

Position Statement on God's Justice

Developed by the Kimball Ave. Justice Watch

Throughout the Bible there are countless references to love. Love has become a central part of our dialogue on what Christianity entails. However, love is bigger than charity and love is more complex than the catch-all "do to other as you would have them to do you". Christian love is not fleeting, nor is it dispensed based on one's beliefs, one's sins or one's personal characteristics. True Christian love is a commitment to justice. It is carrying your neighbor's burdens with them. It is a parallel walk with the 'least of these'.

We believe that the Bible makes clear that righteousness and justice are clearly interconnected concepts. Proverbs 8:19-20 illustrates this stating, "Wisdom walks in the way of righteousness and along the paths of justice." Righteousness is the journey, but justice is the path we walk to achieve righteousness. Righteousness is a reflection in us of our relationship with the Divine, but justice is a reflection of our righteousness expressed in our relationship with others. Sin corrupts both our relationship with the Divine and our relationships with one another; therefore, our journey towards righteousness is incomplete without a journey that seeks justice as well.

In Ezekiel 34, scripture illustrates how sin disrupts the balance between us and God and one another. The shepherd, placed in a position of authority, abuses his relationship with the sheep, whom he is to tend. He feeds himself without feeding the sheep, he stays warm by their wool, but he has failed to strengthen the weak, seek the lost, or heal the sick. Because of his actions, God is against the Shepard and will take away the sheep so he can no longer feed off them. God will shepherd them in his place. However, God's judgment does not end there. God will judge between the sheep since they have muddied the waters and trampled the pastures. The sin of the shepherd introduces imbalance and injustice between the shepherd and the sheep. That imbalance manifests in the power he uses to dominate the herd instead of to tend to them. Similarly, the sheep dominated one another, which is a reflection of the imbalance and injustice sin introduces into their relationships.

The imbalance due to sin that manifests in domination and abuses of power does not simply pertain to individuals. In Revelation 18, we see how nations can be seduced by power, domination and greed. Babylon, personified as a woman, uses her appeal and her power to seduce the other nations into "fornication" with her. Babylon consumed from the nations, and the merchants provided for their needs with disregard for whoever was affected by their domination. Babylon self-proclaims she is a queen, not a widow, who will never see grief again. She is not in need of God. Her needs are fulfilled by others who bend to her will due to their dependence on her.

However, while abuse and domination are pervasive, the paths of justice and righteousness are not hopeless. God gives a vision of the reordered, just world through the prophets of the Old Testament. In Micah 4, God reveals a vision of justice restored. People will beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks, they shall no longer learn war, and they shall sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree. That day of restoration was inaugurated in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, whose mission was "...to preach good news to the poor...proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19) Through his

life, death and resurrection, Jesus restored the balance between God and us and between ourselves and others. Jesus' call to follow him is a call to abandon the self-serving abuse of power and join him in the building of the just Kingdom of God, and--as Matthew 25:31-46 clearly instructs--to act on behalf of the least of those among us.

We are not "doing justice, loving mercy or walking humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8) or exemplifying Christ-like love until we are using our power on behalf of others in an effort to be both transformative and restorative. Justice not only seeks to relieve individual suffering and marginalization, but to challenge and change the systems that create and perpetuate that suffering and marginalization. As followers of Christ, we are to be prophetic voice for justice—identifying agents and systems of injustice and actively bringing them into the light. As God's flock, we are to take action in His Name to give the world a glimpse of the full reality of the coming Day of the Lord.

That is our call and our responsibility as Christians.