

Series: All Peoples	Reference: <i>Various Passages</i>	Title: Congruence?	Date: 07.19.2020
Website Writeup: God demands justice. Injustice is sin. What does the current social justice movement deem as moral & fair as compared to the biblical justice view? Are they congruent?			

Two weeks ago we read verses on justice, mercy & the like. We took the liberty of saying Micah 6:8 sums them up in essence which says...*“He has shown you, O mortal, 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.”*

Then we looked at two short passages in Revelation which give us so much insight into the future image of the diverse Body of Christ. Revelation 5:9-10... *“Worthy are you to take the scroll & to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe & language & people & nation, and you have made them a kingdom & priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*

And then 7:9-10... *“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes & peoples & languages, standing before the throne & before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”*

We said this image speaks volumes, including the worthiness & authority of Christ to define our identity in life. God created the world & people in a certain way & for a purpose - identity's a divine gift.

Obedience, operating out of our God-given identity, and evangelistic purpose on this earth brings with it freedom, health & fulness. This image is one of unity with the diverse peoples of the world under Jesus.

To get to that final future image, Christians immerse themselves in the revealed Word of God (the Bible) guided by the Holy Spirit & shared conviction of the Church in morality, fairness & justice, as we go out taking the message of Christ to all nations (people groups) calling them also to unity & obedience in Jesus (Mt 28:18-20).

Jesus prayed for this unity in John 17. Speaking to the Father, referring to Himself in the third person, He said, *For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (Jn 17:2-3).*

This speaks again to His authority & an open door for anyone to come into relationship with God once again through Christ. In praying for the Believers at that time, He continued praying for all those future peoples who'd stand before the throne in Rev 7 later, *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me & I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - ²³ I in them & you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity (Jn 17:20-23).*

Distinctly, unity in Christ is essential which makes this conversation so important in our current social climate. Some say, the concept of race as defined in society is a social construct.

Meaning, biblically there's only one human race descended from the shared ancestry of Adam & Eve, although broken down into various cultures, tribes, languages, or people groups.

Nations as Scripture refers to them - not of political boundaries, but of cultural linguistic distinction. It's a healthier way to look at others, since viewing everyone as a fellow member of the human race, I automatically see them as equal & can glory in God-given diversity.

The question's clear, how do you view others?

One person recently said, *"The real danger isn't the white supremacist. It's the white liberal progressive who although denounces racism, when they see a black man on the street, crosses to the other side."*

That statement says a lot.

The question is, what do you do? As a white person do you cross to the other side of the street? As an Asian or African American do you view whites as all racists who need to be corrected?

One of the greatest compliments my oldest son, Aidan, received was when a man recounted walking with him in Philly. The man was a suburbanite, Aidan's lived in a multiethnic neighborhood for years. As they came upon some guys which immediately produced fear within this man, Aidan automatically engaged them in conversation. Within minutes this man was convicted of his wrong assumptions.

I was a proud of my son, and commend the man, since Aidan exhibited a shared humanity with these guys & the other humbly learned a lesson.

Do you view different people with a crooked eye? I'm not trying to shame, many times we do! If familiarity breeds contempt, unfamiliarity breeds more.

Do you assume when a person looks at you in a certain way that it's automatically negative due to the color of their skin, or style of dress, without asking what they meant by the look, because you just *'know'* that look was racist, or judgmental in nature. And even when you do ask & they respond, "I didn't mean it that way." You don't take them at their word, saying, "Well, you just don't realize it, I know what you really meant."

Is that fair? Is that a way to begin & foster healthy relationships? Is that the way to pursue reconciliation with other peoples? Is that just?

We all do these things & those growing in Christ have to repent, but hopefully less & less over time as we're transformed into the likeness of Christ as love replaces fear. Ask yourself, "What would Aidan do?" Then engage, pushing aside fear & assumption to know that person. Not because Aidan's our great model, but because in that instance, he exhibited a Christlike outlook & approach to others different than him.

Beginning from negative assumptions isn't viewing others as fellow members of the human race, made in the image & valuable in the eyes of God. It robs them of their individual voice & personality, assuming they're coming from a certain point of view due to their group identity.

Negative group identities & stereotypes are often a danger. They can leave no room for appreciation of peoples as God's creation, or the possibility of Christ's transformation in a person. It can begin with distrust & negative assumption, projecting something onto them which we don't know is true.

And besides...people are fun & interesting when you push past fears & unfamiliarity!

The concept of justice is woven all throughout Scripture from the beginning of biblical history to the end. Justice is a God authored concept. We wouldn't have come up with it on our own due to our strong drive towards group belonging & self-preservation.

Imagine living in those early days of history with tribalism as the standard, when the call to conquer & subjugate other people groups was the norm. If you wandered out of the boundaries of your people group you ran the risk of subjugation or worse by another.

Then here comes this nation, Israel, following God saying, *Do what is just & right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place (Jeremiah 22:3).*

And when they treat you with dignity & respect as God's creation, you look around saying, "What's going on? You're supposed to treat me badly!" Justice, equality, love, mercy...all authored by God!

Israel's God of justice was a paradigm shift of epic proportions!

Israel had always been called to be a blessing to all peoples beginning in Genesis 12 with Abraham. Blessing meant Israel, and consequently Christians, are to be just, merciful, humble people, as well as the mouthpiece of God to all the nations of the earth, bringing them under the unity of God's love, valuing others, holding justice as a central pillar of community.

Biblical justice is marked by these heart attitudes bleeding out into how we view & treat others with kindness & humility, even standing in the gap when someone experiences oppression at the hand of another.

Which begs the question, is biblical justice the same as the social justice put forth in society today?

Because God demands justice & injustice is sin according to the Bible. If social justice is biblical justice, then disagreement can't be tolerated.

The dictionary defines being 'just' as *'based on or behaving according to what is morally right & fair'*. Agree, but Christians add *'according to the Bible'*.

So the question is what does social justice claim as morally right & fair? And what does biblical justice claim as morally right & fair?

If you go to your dictionary & look up the term Social Justice right now, justice is defined as the (re)distribution of wealth, opportunities & privileges within a society. That sounds intelligent & lofty, but know that embedded there is the punishment of the current hegemony as unjustly having progressed at the cost of the other 'minority groups' within its influence. It is distinctly rooted in political & social control, manipulation & coercion.

This is born out of Critical Theory derived from Marxism, whereas biblical justice is born out of our God-given human identity & in how we view & treat others no matter who they are.

Critical Theory says people can be divided into two groups, those with power, those without. It claims those with power *always* oppress the powerless, which isn't true.

The categories of Oppressed & Oppressor are based upon group identity, such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, income, etc.

You can actually be an Oppressor in one category & the Oppressed in another due to your varied identities - which is called Intersectionality. For instance, two white men these days may be seen as Oppressors, but if one's gay, he's better off than the other, because he's oppressed as a homosexual.

Intersectionality seeks to measure levels of power & oppression - the more oppressed you are, the more moral authority you have according to Critical Theory.

But the Gospel is the great equalizer, which says, *for all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God,* ²⁴ *and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* (Ro 3:23-24).

Oppression in the gospel isn't the starting point for communal need & equality. Rather, our created identity as the human race & personal sin equalize us. God gives value & sin puts us all in the humble position of need before Him. Oppression according to the Bible should be addressed, but it in no way deems the Oppressed as innocent before God, nor does it negate mercy for the Oppressor. This is why MLK was so brilliant, since he saw the eradication of oppression was to release both the Oppressed & the Oppressor from the sin of oppression.

Systems of oppression are complicated things & need to be addressed well. The first subtle lie of critical theory driving the social justice movement is, the perceived oppression of certain groups makes them morally higher than those perceived to be in power.

There are three major conflicts between Christianity & Critical Theory.

Firstly, Critical Theory claims our value lies in our self-made identities, whereas Christianity claims our value comes from being created in God's image; our God-given identity.

Secondly, Critical Theory pits people against one another, whereas Christianity says God created all equally valuable, guilty of sin & able to find Grace & Mercy in Jesus. The Bible defines sin as anything which violates God's design for humankind, *including* oppression of others.

But Critical Theory only defines sin as the oppression of others. Therefore, violence, jealousy, theft, anger & the like from the Oppressed are only considered *excusable reactions* in the face of the Oppressor. This is because Critical Theory sees only oppression as sinful, so the Oppressed are always innocent.

And thirdly, the solution of salvation is errant as well, since Critical Theory says salvation's only found through social liberation, or socioeconomic betterment achieved through activism which is why it's so popular right now. Whereas the Bible says all are guilty of sin & can find salvation only through Jesus.

We can't interpret God's kingdom as reserved *only* for the Poor & Oppressed. David, Moses, Abraham, Nicodemus & Paul were living proof, the wealthy, powerful & educated are also in need & equally welcome in God's Kingdom.

Likewise, people such as the Samaritan woman at the well, one we might consider to be oppressed, are equally culpable for their sin & able to receive grace from Jesus. She was treated with dignity & respect, but also called to account for her sin & held to the standards of holiness by Jesus as well.

Everyone equal under Christ.

Critical theory, driving today's social justice movement, says even if you're a poor Appalachian person born into poverty who clawed his way out, building wealth & success for yourself in

honest ways, it doesn't matter. If you're identified with the current hegemony you're considered privileged & deemed to have achieved success through unjust means.

Social justice doesn't take the individual into consideration, but only works in terms of groups. It doesn't matter if we've had a black president, or if you've always been fair & moral in practice. It's only about the oppressed groups concerns.

The dictionary & accepted definition of Social Justice is born out of a Marxist ideology of state redistribution of advantages & resources to disadvantaged groups to satisfy their perceived rights to socioeconomic equality.

I say groups, since it's not *just* minorities, women are included as a persecuted group, even though they make up more than half of society.

There are three things on which the social justice movement is focused & antithetical to a Christian worldview...

Firstly, it focusses on Minority Equality, which we agree with, but it goes further, extending into equity of power & wealth, hence redistribution.

Scripture calls us to view & treat others as equal, but no where does it call us to the redistribution of wealth & power across the board.

Critical Theory dictates, there's no longer any consideration or discussion of the inherent problems/sin within oppressed groups, since it assigns blame for disparate outcomes on the external sin of the Oppressor & is vehemently guarded by the charge of 'victim blaming' if you attempt to point these out.

Two weeks ago we said, when evangelizing peoples we have to consider what to keep, change, or throw out from a culture when they come into Christ & the Gospel holds all people responsible for their sin.

In the Social Justice Movement that's no longer the case - the oppressed group in question is perceived to have no fault, hiding behind verbal entrapments, which isn't biblical justice & definitely detrimental to society & even them as a group.

Secondly, the Social Justice Movement is focused on Feminism & Women's Rights. Again, we'd all agree women should be viewed & treated as equal in society.

However this is no longer the sincere desire it was to overcome subjugation & give women an equal voice & role in society, opening up opportunity. It's morphed into the destruction of the male voice - to take away power & silence, and has moved into promoting other sexual identities & abortion which are contrary to Scripture.

This also wouldn't be biblical justice, nor good for the human race.

Thirdly, the Social Justice Movement seeks to advance the LBGTQA+ agenda.

In 1989 there was a book written called, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer its Fear & Hatred of Gays in the 90s*, by two professors, Kirk & Madsen. They had a threefold goal in writing the book, and were clear, they sought to change America through propaganda.

Firstly, it was to *Desensitize* society to the homosexual lifestyle. Basically, to get people so familiar with the imagery & lifestyle to have them accept it. They said, "People may have an aversion to taking a shower, but eventually they'll get used to being wet."

Now every show on TV has a gay character although the homosexual community is a very narrow slice of society, and even *Sponge Bob* has come out of the closet.

Their second goal was *Jamming*. This was the desire to associate biblically Christian views with other abhorrent things in society, such as oppression of peoples. They've done well at this. It's almost embarrassing to say you're a Christian, the term's viewed with such negativity. Almost every Christian character on TV is portrayed as an unintelligent bigot stuck in ancient non-relevant ways.

Their third goal was *Conversion*, which is simply that people will become allies of the movement. They've done this by hitching themselves to the plight of persecuted peoples which is very hard to disagree with without sounding like a total insensitive jerk. None of this would be biblical justice, nor good for the human race.

What the social justice movement & critical theory claim as moral & fair are in clear contradiction with what the Bible claims as moral & fair. They can't be married, but again, God came up with the concept of justice & demands His people practice it in heart & action.

Which means it's a time we should expect persecution & in which we should get creative to practice justice, mercy & kindness in new & creative ways, not aligning ourselves with movements which don't reflect God's true heart for these things.

Ephesians 2 says, *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions & sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world & of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Eph 2:1-2). Then...But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved (Eph 2:4-5).*

Then further in Ephesians 2 it gives us the reconciling result of this Gospel reality when it says... For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one & has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (Eph 2:14)...*His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came & preached peace to you who were far away & peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (Eph 2:15-18).*

The dividing wall of hostility between peoples is removed via unity in Christ where everyone's truly equal, valued & responsible for their own response to the Creator God who has full authority over the human race.

That means shared conviction on what is right, just, moral & fair under Christ. Which often puts us squarely at odds with what our culture has deemed as morally right, just & fair, but it doesn't release us from pursuing & preaching this from a biblical perspective. Again, this is about our unity in Christ as guided by the revealed Word of God, the Holy Spirit & shared scriptural conviction.

Let's end with this statement...We affirm, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has both secured our eternal salvation & broken down the dividing wall of separation, not only between redeemed Jews & Gentiles, but also between believers from every nation, tribe & language. This is so Christ might reconcile us, not only theologically but also in practice, as one - thereby killing the hostility which separates us. Therefore, we deny that racial reconciliation in the Church is a false "social" Gospel. Rather, we affirm multiethnic unity in the Gospel is essential to our witness & brings our conduct in step with the truth of the Gospel. Racism is antithetical to the Gospel, therefore, we are antiracist.

Community Group Questions

1. Have you ever swam against the flow with friends, or at work? How did that feel, and how did it go?
2. Choose four different people to read aloud again the passages from this sermon one-by-one slowly together. Leave ample time between each passage to meditate & quietly pray in order to grasp what God is saying to us in it. Jot down thoughts, phrases, or impressions you get for discussion later. The passages are...
 1. **Revelation 5:9-10 & 7:9-10...** *“Worthy are you to take the scroll & to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe & language & people & nation, and you have made them a kingdom & priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”...“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes & peoples & languages, standing before the throne & before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'”*
 2. **John 17:20-23...** *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me & I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - ²³ I in them & you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity.”*
 3. **Ephesians 2:1-2 & 4-5...** *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions & sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world & of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient...because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved.*
 4. **Ephesians 2:14 & 15-18...** *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one & has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came & preached peace to you who were far away & peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*