

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

February 19, 2023

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Did God Really Say?

PART

7

TITLE

Doing What Is Right For Others

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 58:1-14



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Imagine a perfect world, a world without guilt, strife or sickness. A world where everything function in harmony. For a time the world was at peace, diversity was appreciated, and love was uninterrupted. This was God's beautiful design. God's critic, Satan entered the story, and desiring to destroy our confidence in God's word, he asked, "Did God really say?" Man began to question God's intentions for authority, humanity, race, sexuality, injustice. Out of love and at the fullness of time God sent Jesus into the world to rescue his beautiful design from sin. We simply won't flourish unless we yield and agree with God. The question remains, did God really say?

Providence family, it's good to see you this morning. I hope that you are doing well and I hope that you've had a really good week. If you're a guest with us, welcome. We're thrilled that you've joined us. I hope this week has been a good week for you. I hope that that his word has been a part of your week. I hope the last time that you heard his word wasn't last Sunday or the last time that you came. I hope that you have a plan. And if you don't have a plan of how that works, of how you engaged with the Lord, we want to be able to help you with that. It's really important that we all understand that we all woke up today and we all woke up in someone else's world. I know you have your things, and your people, and your relationships, and your burdens and your taxes, and we call all the things ours and we sort of envision everything that is part of our life.

And this is like, "This is my world. This is my little world, this is my little family." And yet all of that little world and little family is all lived out practically in someone else's world. And God, our creator, has spoken into how to live in his world in a way that allows us to flourish as people and as families, as a church family and as a society. And so it's important for us to be in his word. And we like to help people if they want that help. And so we provide a little guide. Well, the next guide that is, well, this is a little confusing. We have two more weeks in this series and then we start a six-week series that leads up to Easter. I'm sorry, it's been a long morning already. And in those six weeks, what we want to be able to do is to lead us as a church family through reading his word together if you will participate. And to pray every day towards certain things.

And so what we're going to do is starting next Monday, you say, "Well, how come you're doing it this week?" Well, we have a lot of people at Providence who rarely come two weeks in a row. So we want to go ahead and help you this week if you're not going to be here next week because this starts the following Monday. And just every day there's what to read, how to pray so that we can be doing that as a church family. And so they are free and they're in the lobby. I hope you'll get one. Tonight we're going to be back. I hope that you'll join us at 6:00 p.m. to pray and to worship. I say this frequently when we have them. We do them once a month. But it's, to me, I think it's the most important thing that we do as a church family together, even more important than what we're doing right now. Not to make light of this, I think what we're doing right now is very important. I prepared a lot for this moment.

The fact is that God tells us that prayer is the language of humility. And he tells us that he opposes the proud and he gives grace to the humble. And so if a church is to be a recipient frequently of his overflowing grace to us, they have to be a humble people. And if we're a humble people, we'll be a praying people. And so we will

gather tonight to sing and to pray about things that are a real burden in our lives, in our church family, and in the world. And I hope that you'll join us. So, let me pray for us.

Father in heaven, we bow before you and I ask that you would be pleased with us. We want to be pleasing to you. And I know that this passage is going to bring some more conviction that they intended to experience when they walked in the room. And so I ask that you would help us to remember as we read that there is no one more committed to our good than you. And that you expose these things in our life in order to lead us to repentance, where we would find mercy and help in our day, in our time of need. And so would you speak through weakness and would you give us courage and delight? Help us to relish in the fact that Jesus died for us. And thank you so much for your word. And we pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.

We're in a series that's called, Did God really Say? These are the first words spoken by Satan in the Bible. We're looking at how God created life to flourish. What happens when we don't follow His plans. Specifically in different areas such as authority and life, race and gender, sexuality, responsibility, justice and salvation. We're looking at how would he lead us to a place of restoration that we might be able to flourish again. A lot of these sermons are hard to preach and I know they're hard to hear. Sometimes, having just clarity helps. And so all of these messages are available at pray.org/say. And if you would even want to follow along with this message this morning in real time, you can find a message there. It's called Doing What Is Right For Others.

If you have a Bible, if you want to turn with me to Isaiah chapter 58. Isaiah 58 is a beautiful rebuke. And so it may sting a little bit as it reveals some things about our own life. It speaks about justice. And these days social justice seems to be the cry of our age. It's the banner under which hopes of righteousness, mercy, equity, opportunity, vengeance and rest ... And well, they all reside there. It's an amazing banner. How big it must be that someone who wants opportunity and someone who wants revenge can both claim it? Restitution and equity, righteousness and mercy. There's something about the term that resonates with us. It seems to describe a perfect environment that we all want. Social seems to add the ingredients of relationship and community and people and mercy and love and compassion. People are involved. And so we think social, that's a good thing. And justice is clearly a good thing. Justice brings the arbiter that impartially gives each person their due. And so you have this relational component and you have this really strong, really strong component that brings truth and equity and help.

And so we love to talk about social justice today. From a distance the very words that are oftentimes used in our society today, they seem to just fit. It's the first thing my mind thinks about is Isaiah chapter nine verse seven. Seems to fit the kingdom that we're supposed to be led to imagine that Jesus Christ is going to uphold the righteousness and justice forevermore. And yet the closer we get to understanding how people are using the term social justice in our time, in our age today, the more confusion exists even among us as to what it means. And the more discrepancy we find between it and the justice that's found in the Bible.

The fact is, is the world is unjust, and we have all contributed. If you've ever lied, if you've ever been self-seek-

ing, selfish, if you've ever been greedy, you've contributed, which means we all have. Injustice is what happens when sinners get together on earth. It comes from us. The question is, what do we do with it? How do we create this justice, this right environment? And what we find is, there's competing definitions. We look last week and we're really going to focus on this is, what is biblical social justice? First of all, you're not going to find it in the Bible. You're like, "Well, how is it biblical?" You're going to find justice in the Bible. But the Bible defines justice is that which creates a healthy society, healthy social order. Where we looked at last week is what this is it's a submission first and foremost of our heart to God that brings our lives, our relationships, our responsibilities into compliance with his law in order to render people what he says they do.

And so it's radically God oriented. We care about who he is, we regard him his word. We want to honor him, we want to comply. We want to wrap our life around him. That's what justice is from the scriptures. It has the most benefit for society. The society, our society and the world is not yielding to the Lord, has no regard for the Lord. It's not thinking about his law, it's not thinking about compliance, and yet it's seasoned justice in the world. And so what we find is the different brand of social justice that we looked at last week. I'm just going to speak of it today and let's just, what is the secular social justice? It's the belief that literally everyone has the right to equal possessions, privilege and opportunity. And to the extent that it's missing in a society that society's unjust and is in need of realignment through redistribution. Meaning redistribution of privileges, possessions and opportunities.

Social justice that we hear about all the time that I heard last night, right? Two different news stories talk about social justice in the world. And no regard for the Lord. It's drawn from a well called critical theory that views everybody either in camps of being an oppressor or oppressed on the basis of your sex, or your gender, or your race, various other categories. And the risk in it is this. It's not that it's not somewhat motivated by mercy and a real desire for fairness. The problem is that it doesn't consult God for how to bring justice into the world, into his world. And so what it does is it creates first of all categories of guilt. That if you were born with these categories, skin color, gender, then you're more guilty than those people who are unlike you. It also creates a different standard of justice, saying that different rules should apply for group of people and it also creates a different means of salvation where we would save ourself by ridding the world of inequity.

And I would simply say to you again, and this is what we're going to focus on this. We are not going to flourish as people or as society until we agree with what God really has said. It is his world and he is the just one. In fact, that's where I want to start is where we left off last week, I just want to ... I can't go back into it, and I've tried to the first two services and got in trouble with time both times, and so I can't do it. But I have to at least tell you what we talked about last week. And that is the Bible starts with God. In the beginning God created the heaven in the earth and he's just, he was ruling before we got here. And righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

And what that means is that God does what is right all the time. He gives what is right all the time, and he delivers a verdict as the judge over the earth that is right all the time. He's just, and then he created us and he

created us accountable to him. He brought us, he made us, and he brought us into this just environment. And he gave us one command. “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. I assure you, if you eat it, I will hold you accountable and you’ll die.”

And they were tempted to do God’s justice. They sinned against God and brought a flood of brokenness in the world that we still experience today. First thing that happens is they died spiritually. And the second thing that happened is their own nature was literally, it was rebuilt, it was reconstituted, their nature which was socially friendly, their nature, our nature as human beings. And one day because of Jesus Christ, this is what heaven is going to be like. It’s my life for your good, my resources for your good, my strength and energy for your good. I’m here to make your life better. Just imagine a society like that where everyone is consumed by saying, “Whatever I have, I am here for you.” And if everyone is doing that mutually, everyone gets served. This is what heaven is going to be like. And yet when we sin against God, our nature is reconstituted. It’s where we started saying and thinking perpetually, your life for my good, your things to make my life more comfortable, your energy to serve me and make my life better. And this is the fuel of all injustice and this fuel, it’s in every one of us. And we learned how to blame. It’s not my fault, it’s your fault. My daddy’s fault. It’s your daddy’s fault. It’s everybody’s fault, but it’s not my fault. And so God had to come in and say, “All right, let’s talk about this fault thing.” And that was the third point we looked at last week, and that is that God began his terms of justice with personal responsibility. “The soul that sins shall die.” People do create unjust conditions in which we must live. And yet, our sin is our sin alone. When that sentence came out of your mouth, and it was sinful and you said, “Yeah, but she instigated it.” The entry point of the gospel is we never again say, “Yeah, but.” We’d simply say, “Yes, I did. It came out of me. I did that. I said that. That was sin against God. There were conditions, there were circumstances, I was instigated, but I didn’t have to respond that way, but I did respond that way.”

“And the soul that sins, shall die.” The entry point of the gospel is taking responsibility for our own sin, our own life. And when there is sin, we repent and find hope. And that brings to the last point we looked at last week, and that is that Christ came to prove God’s justice and to be our justifier. He’s the just and the justifier, the one who has faith in him. Jesus Christ was put forward as a propitiation. That means a substitutionary sacrifice. He died in our place, then he went to a grave, he was buried and he rose from the dead. And when he rose from the dead, he extended an invitation, which is remarkable. And he says, “If you’ll put your faith and trust in me, then all your sin will fall upon me and all my righteousness, all the accomplishments of my righteousness will be placed upon you.”

You see, the most important question that every single one of us have to answer in life, it is critical you understand. Is that if you have affirmed that you are a sinner, that you’ve ever sinned against God, and you’re also saying that God has forgiven me, you have to ask this question. How is it possible for God who is just to acquit a sinner and bring them to heaven and remain just when his justice demands that he always deliver a verdict that is right? The only way God who is just can stay just and acquit you and me and bring us to heaven

is if he first makes us righteous. And that's what he did in Christ. Christ came. He had no sin. He died, and he gives his righteousness to everyone who believes, which is why he is not only the just, he says, "There's a wage of sin." And he says, "Someone will die for it."

But he's also the justifier. He loves us so much that he put his own son as a sacrifice on a cross so that we can enjoy his righteousness and be brought to heaven. Now, for those who believe this and are changed by this, it doesn't just justify us, it does something else. Fills us with his Holy Spirit so that we pursue love and a kind of love that seeks justice. Now, what does that justice look like?

Isaiah 58, this is what he says. "Cry aloud. Do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet, declare to my people, their transgression to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways. And if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God, they ask of me righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God. Why have we fasted and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it. Behold in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers.

Behold you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. It's such a fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sack cloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose to, loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppress go free, to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless pour into your house. When you see the naked to cover him? And to not hide yourself from your own flesh? And then shall your light break forth like the dawn and your healing shall spring up speedily, your righteousness shall go before you and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard."

What do we find here? First, a relationship with Christ will create a burden for the hurting. I want you to notice how he starts here. This is God speaking. This is God himself describing his people. And look what he says in verse two about them. He says, "They seek me daily and delight to know my ways. They ask of me righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God." So just notice, I mean, these are all pretty admirable characteristics. We would all think God must be pretty happy about this. They're seeking, knowing, asking and drawing near. These aren't just random impulses of spiritual energy. It's a daily routine.

And so it's a little confusing perhaps when you read verse one. And verse one, God tells Isaiah, "Cry aloud or do not hold back." In other words, "I'm about to tell you them something that I know they're not going to like. And it's going to be evident on their faces. And when you see it on their faces, you're going to want to shrink back. You're going to want to go mute. You are not going to want to tell them everything I am telling you to tell them. Because if you do, they're going to be mad at you. But I'm telling you, Isaiah, 'Dump the truck.;" That's what he says. "Do not hold back, leave no dirt in the truck, lift up your voice like a trumpet."

And then he tells them to proclaim or to declare my people their transgression and their sins.

And so verse one highlights that God has some angst about his people, because they're transgressing and sinning. Verse two, at least it's wrapped with these things that seem to look good. And so what gives is the part of verse two we didn't read yet? Verse two, this is what he says, "They seek me daily and delight to know my ways." Now notice this, "As if. As if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment or justice of their God."

So, what's happening? What's happening to them is something that happens to all of us. And that is we tend to compartmentalize our faith. We tend to view life as a bunch of buckets, compartments. We have a marriage over there, friendships here, children here, extended family here, our work here, our finances here, NC State Carolina basketballs right there. And then there's the church thing and the gospel thing. And we just make all these buckets. And we imagine life is possible that we can live to where these buckets they don't intersect. His condemnation of the people was that they were trying and actually finding within their hearts the ability to compartmentalize the spiritual routine that included no real concern for the righteousness or the justice of God.

But when they heard Isaiah, they do what all humanity does. They play the victim. "It's not my fault." What do they do? "Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourself and you take no knowledge of it?" See, they're saying say, "Look, we're the one fasting, spiritual discipline, even humiliation, and we are humbling ourself. If there's a problem here, it's on you." Of course, the you here is God. And so God wants to explain himself even more so. And so he says, "Look, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. It's such the fast that I choose a day for a person to humble himself, will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?"

And so what's happening is there's people over here and in this compartment they're like, okay, this is Friday and on Friday I have workers. They're self-seeking, but they're also oppressing your workers. And so they're mistreating people and then they're saying, "Hey, let's hit the pause button on this relationship. Because now I need to go to church and I need to fast. And I have spiritual activity. "Oh, don't worry, I'll be back Monday to oppress you some more, to mistreat you some more, to ignore your plight in the world some more." And so there's these social relationships that are taking place and then there's this spiritual activity that is taking place. And the people of Israel were assuming that they were in separate compartments of their life.

Pausing our mistreatment of people to do spiritual things is unacceptable to God. So he continues, "Is not this the fast that I choose to lose the bonds of wickedness and to undo the straps of the yoke and to let the oppress go free and to break every yoke?" It's like, "Okay, so that's what a fast is. All right, so how do I wake up in the morning and break a yoke?" So he makes it a little bit more granular in verse seven. "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?" Now that's tangible. Has anybody this week fed someone who is hungry? And

to bring a homeless poor into your house. When you see naked to cover him, not to hide yourself from your own flesh. You see, if you read Isaiah, if you read Ezekiel, if you read Malachi, Zacharia, what you find is the principle there. And it's this, that if we have no active concern for the vulnerable, we are mistaken about the quality of our relationship with God.

This is why Proverbs 14 says, "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his maker." You can all imagine, of course maker, this is God, right? You can all imagine that our relationship with God would be affected if we're insulting God. Well, the only thing you have to do to insult God is oppress a poor man. Devotion to God that ignores hurting people is devotion that fails to get off the ground. And Jesus echoed this when he got to the earth and he began looking at what's happening. And he saw these scribes and he says to them, "These are people who devour widows houses and for a pretense make long prayers." You see what they're doing? They're mistreating people and praying, and they find no problem with that combination.

We can come to prayer and worship night, and we can ignore the people who are hungry at the same time. When Jesus described the faith of those whom at the final judgment are sent to heaven, he says, "Of their life, I was hungry and you gave me food and I was thirsty and you gave me drink, and I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me." And when they ask, "When did we ever see you and serve you in those ways?" And he says, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

Of course, if you've read that passage, you know that he does the flip side and he addresses people who are also going to hell. And he describes their life on the earth as those who saw him in all of those cases and didn't serve him. And he said, "When did we see you and not do these things for you?" And he says, "When you didn't do it for the least of these, you also didn't do it for me." You see, God loves every single one of us. And yet he has a special burden for what is called the quartet of the vulnerable. You find this quartet in Zechariah. Render true judgments, literally seek justice and do not oppress. Here's the quartet, the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, which is the immigrant, and the poor. To stand with God is to stand with them. Before we move on, let me just ask you a question. On this basis, how is your relationship with God? How is your relationship with God?

Second thing I want you to see is that a burden for the hurting will lead us to pursue justice. The burden for the hurting will lead us to the pursuit of justice. If it's true that justice in the scripture is submitting to God to bring our life into compliance with his words so that we can render people what he says that they're due, we should ask the question, "Well, what does he ask us to render? What does he say to give?" And he tells us to give at very least three different categories of things to people. One, advocacy. A voice. One of the ways that we lose the bonds of wickedness is to do what Proverbs 31 says, "And that is to open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy."

You see, the vulnerable are not more worthy. They're simply in more need of an advocate. They need a voice who will join them and speak for them and with them. And this way that we can advocate, and of course I know, I know many at Providence, I know you excel in this. One of the ways we do this is pray. We pray for people. That's one way to advocate for people. God I have a friend, they have a need and I'm asking you help. Another way is to speak for them or to use your vote, it's a voice. Or to connect a person to legal or medical or financial resources when you know that they're in crisis. Or perhaps to help someone gain self-sufficiency. That's where we would say, "I want to advocate for somebody who needs an advocate."

Second is being generous. Generosity. Part of what is meant to lose the bonds of the wickedness is to share our bread with the hungry, our house with the poor. and our clothing with those who don't have clothing. The Bible teaches that our money is not the state's. The Bible teaches that our money is not ours. The Bible teaches our money is his. And he entrust to us a portion to manage according to his priorities. And one of his priorities, this lays through the entire Bible, is generosity.

And the Old Testament generosity was instructed, it was applauded and it was even baked into property law. If you were a landowner, you were not allowed to harvest all of your grain. You had to leave some stalk there so that the poor in Israel could come to your land and who could literally thresh some for themselves so that they could eat. It was baked into property law. God did not entrust equal wealth to people. God did not demand the equalizing of wealth, but he did require generosity from all. In the New Testament, generosity is magnified. When God gave his best, in sending his son., Jesus came to the earth and he taught things like, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. This is your Lord speaking. Sell your possessions and give to the poor."

Then Jesus gave his life. And so for followers of Jesus, generosity can't be optional. And this is why John, when he's sitting there, thinking about, "What does it mean mean for Jesus to live within our heart by his spirit?" He says, "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" Third thing we're supposed to give is impartiality. Part of what it means to lose the bonds of wickedness is not hiding yourself from your own flesh. The fact is that when we come into a room like this, and we look at people, it's only natural for us to distinguish people by characteristics externally. And so we look at whether it's gender, whether we look at skin color, we look at what shirt you're wearing. Is it blue? Is it red today where your institutional loyalties? And we start to create groups of people. And because we all fit in a group, it's only natural for us to show favoritism, impartiality to the group that we're most like.

And yet what he's saying here when he says to us in verse seven. "Not hiding yourself from your own flesh." What he's saying is we're all created in the image of God. And as members of the human race, we are all of the same flesh. Which is why in James chapter two, he says, "For us to show partiality, or favoritism to people who are outside of our group or inside of our group is the sin against God's law to love our neighbor as our-

self.” And that leads to the third and last point, and that is the division of Jesus is needed to sustain seeking justice.

Let me just say that first of all, I know I’ve been here a long time. I’ve been here 25 years now. And I know there are just countless people that some of which I’m even looking at right now. They just give yourself to this. You’re kind to the poor. You’re generous to people, you advocate for people who are weak, you’re not partial in your care to people. I’m just so grateful for that. Justice is hard, this kind of impartiality and advocacy and generosity, it’s hard to sustain, it’s hard to get off the ground. It’s hard to keep off the ground.

And so you got to ask the question, “What’s the fuel source to actually live like this for the long haul?” We need a fuel source. And what I want to show you right now is something that’s very important. And that is what most people do. This is our go-to as humanity is we try to guilt people into it by duty. And so we say, “Okay, here’s a need. You see this need. Look how sad this need is, this need needs you.” And then we say, “You know what? It’s your duty to give. And if you’ll give, you’ll stop feeling so bad about yourself and I’ll stop shaming you.”

But here’s the reality about duty. Duty may get justice off the ground, but only delight keeps it in the air. You have to enjoy doing this. And so the question is, where does the heart change come from? It’s where this becomes our mode of operation and not just some sporadic guilt feeling after a sermon on Isaiah 58. The only way that I know is delight, and this is what he gets at. You see in verse 14, he says, “Then you shall take delight in the Lord and I’ll make you ride on the heights of the earth.” A part of his delight must be in the promises that he gives in Isaiah 58, such as, “Your light shall break forth like the dawn and your healing shall spring up and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.” All of these promises that he gives to us in Isaiah 58 of what happens when we do this, there has to be some delight in that, but that’s not the greatest delight of all. The greatest delight of all is the see and to relish what Jesus did for us.

It’s to see what he did for you and for me. You see, when Jesus came to the earth, he could have come in any fashion in any home he wanted, and he chose parents who were so poor that they gave the offering that was only required by the poorest of the poor. When Jesus walked around for three years, he said, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nest, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head,” which meant for three years he was homeless. When it was time to give his life, he rode on a borrowed donkey. He ate his last meal in a borrowed room. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. And in between all this, of course, he died for our sin and he did all this to be our advocate.

1 John says, “That we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ, the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins. And not only for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” See, when Jesus rose, he invited us to believe we are saved if we place our faith in him, but that faith doesn’t stay alone. No, that faith blooms into love and justice for others. And can you just imagine for a moment, just imagine society if all the

Christians in America actually live like Isaiah 58. Can you imagine how less attractive human social theories would be about what justice must be needed, if all the people who are claiming that Jesus is king of their life would live like this.

And so what do we do with this? First, let me encourage you to yield to the Bible as your authority. I know we talk about this every week and it's because it's that important. We live in his world, he's spoken how to flourish in his world, and I urge you to do so. Second, let me encourage you to allow the gospel to inform our pursuit of justice. I know some of you, you maybe even have occupations. You maybe walk in here and you may be like a weekday warrior for social justice that we have described. I'm really glad that you care about seeking equity for people and helping people who are hurting. It's really, I actually think it's a good thing that within your heart is the desire to help people.

But let me you to consider that the greatest way to bring justice inside his world is to bring justice according to God's instructions for his world. What you find is that when you lean on the gospel, what you find in the gospel is something that's going to disturb you. See, the gospel shows the Savior has authority over us, but who used that authority to serve us and save us. Then he says to us something like this, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Which means that blessed is the person who recognizes that their spirituality is of such a poverty level that it leads them to say, "I need a savior, and they find that savior in Jesus." Now the question is, what is somebody who knows that they are spiritually poor with outside of Christ? How do they respond to someone they see as materially poor?

Many of us say, "Well, we should be kind." But our flesh typically gets in the way and say, "But only to the deserving. I want to be kind to the deserving poor." What if Jesus said that? What if Jesus looked out over heaven before he came and he said, "I'll tell you what, I'm going to die for everyone who's deserving down there." He wouldn't have come. He wouldn't have found anybody. You see, it's the gospel of Jesus that asked us to look at the vulnerable as if looking into the mirror of our own spiritual condition before Jesus. Sometimes it's the very active compassion to someone who is not deserving that warms their heart to the love of Christ. Which is why it is wise for all of us to ask repeatedly, maybe even weekly or monthly, "Who had a need that I met this week?"

Third, let's show the evidence of God's coming kingdom in the church. You see, the church is called to give a world just a glimpse of a society that Jesus is going to rule. It's marked by justice and righteousness. Now, what that means is that we get the opportunity within the church family to love one another, to be impartial towards one another, to advocate towards one another, to be generous towards one another. And in doing so, we exemplify a kingdom where all its citizens flourish.

Well, that leads us to number four, and that is to demonstrate biblical justice as we share the gospel. I know there's needs all over the world, but man's greatest problem is guilt before God. And therefore the greatest

solution, the greatest ointment we can give to our culture is to continue to tell people about the life and death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But yet, as we speak of justice in the gospel, we can reinforce that by treating people outside of the church with impartiality, as an advocate, and being generous to people. Because every time we give of ourselves in order to get into the way of injustice, whether it's human trafficking or whether it's exploitation of the poor, whether it's abuse, or hunger, we provide a winsome apologetic of God's kingdom to those who are hearing us talk about it in the gospel.

And that leads to the last thing, and that is let me invite you to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. I know that many of you, just like me, read parts of Isaiah 58, and I really do have a heart to seek the Lord. I really do want to draw near to him. I really do want to pray to him. I have those inclinations of heart. And yet I can also look and I can see sin in my life, even in the things, I mean, this thing worked me over before I read it to you this morning. The fact is the Bible says that each and every one of us have sinned against God. We've all broke fellowship with him. And the day is coming when we are going to stand before God Almighty. And on that day, his holiness is literally going to burn so brightly in front of us that Romans chapter three says, "We will have no inclination of whatsoever to talk. We will want to blame no one. We will not to not want to justify anything, and nor will we want to boast of our resume."

In that day when you stand before the Lord, the only thing that matters is the righteousness of Christ. And that righteousness of Christ is imputed to us here on the earth when we put our faith in his son. My question is, have you put your faith in Jesus? It is the only thing that matters most. And if you see that you're a sinner and you need his grace, you can call upon him and say, "I believe in what Christ did and I confess him as Lord. Would you forgive me?" And the Bible says he'll forgive you.

So, let me pray. Father in heaven, as we prepare to sing again, before we sing, we ask that you would search our hearts. The things that we have read, I ask God that you would help us to examine. We thank you for your grace. We thank you that you expose these things not to punish us, but to expose so that we would repent. That we would be able to obey you at your word and experience a flourishing for ourself, and for others that we're currently missing. So I pray for those of you of us who know you as savior and Lord God, that you would incline our hearts Lord. We incline our hearts, Lord to resist the sin of compartmentalizing spiritual activity in our treatment of people. And I pray for those who are considering trusting you now as well. You would incline their hearts to belief and to call upon you now in faith. We know the world is broken and we know that you've sent us to the world and so we sing of that now. Encourage us as we sing, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. You stand, let's sing.



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