

Rebuilding with God: Through Justice

Nehemiah 5:1-13 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 24 October 2021

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: Do you have a favorite film that focuses on the theme of justice? What about it resonates with you?

Worship: [Micah 6:6-8](#) (Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?)

Sermon Summary for [Nehemiah 5:1-13](#) (Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.)

Throughout Scripture, God introduces Himself as One who fights for the poor, the vulnerable, and the oppressed. Justice is at the heart of God's character, inherent to His essence ([Deut 32:4](#)). So, it's no surprise that Jesus embodies this same passion for justice. He came to make the crooked straight, the wrong right. And we as sinful Christians are justified in Him by faith. This is an undeserved, grace-filled gift, and Jesus wants this righteousness to extend throughout His creation – to mend the fabric of the world. And because of Christ's heart for justice, the Gospel will lead us into the pursuit of justice too.

The Priority of Justice // The mending of Jerusalem's walls was with a greater good in mind: to make room and structure for the flourishing of community under God's care and blessing. For if justice isn't being done inside the walls, then the walls are useless. **Justice** is the equitable, even gracious treatment of our neighbor – moved by mercy and through humble self-sacrifice. Justice is relational. Moved by love for our neighbor – out of the love we receive from God – we seek our neighbor's flourishing ([Micah 6:8](#)). Through the cross, right is done and mercy is shown to those who can't help themselves. So, the more we walk with God in humility, learning His ways, the more we will prioritize justice. We need to pursue justice and let it become a core part of who we are. For if our hearts are closed to these needs of justice, then they are closed to Jesus.

The People of Justice // God has dealt with the injustice of the world in Christ. So we don't have to panic over the injustices we suffer (though we so often do). Instead, we can entrust ourselves to the One who judges justly. Our Father feeds the poor, cares for the stranger, clothes the destitute, and defends the vulnerable ([Ps 68:5](#), [Ps 146:7-9](#), [Zech 7:9-11](#)). And because we have been forever changed by the justice ministry of Jesus, we are called to promote it in His name. As Tim Keller wrote, "According to the Bible, the justness of a community is evaluated on the basis of how it treats [the oppressed and vulnerable]. And not just those who didn't screw up and get themselves in trouble. We all get ourselves in trouble all the time and are in constant need of God's undeserved mercy!"

The Patterns of Justice // There are three patterns for doing justice: (1) **Relief** of specific, immediate needs, (2) **Development** of people and communities, and (3) **Social Reform** by speaking out against injustices and standing against such systems in God's name. Most of us never think beyond relief. But when we actually sit down with people – to get to know them and learn more about their needs and the needs of their communities – then, we can better address what tools and skills and resources and opportunities people need to move forward. The same is true of our pursuit to bring about God-honoring social reform. So we must ask ourselves: Where does God want us both individually and collectively to seek reform in Jesus's name?

The Power of Justice is the Gospel of Jesus. For He is the One who came to bring justice to the earth through His presence and sacrifice. He embodies justice ministry to the utmost – at total expense to self – in order to pour out mercy. The Gospel empowers us, emboldening and prodding us to do justice. God has always identified Himself with the vulnerable, but never as He did in Jesus, all so He could bring justice to a world of vulnerable people like us. And He is calling us to do the same.

Discussion Questions (You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)

A Priority

- Up until now Nehemiah was “*not getting off the walls.*” What changes in Nehemiah chapter 5?
- Paul provided a definition for justice that centered around *The Golden Rule* (with some expounding). He noted that justice in God’s eyes involves the treatment of neighbors *equitably* but also *graciously*. Take a moment to reflect on that definition as a group.
 - How does this definition differ from the world’s common definition of justice?
 - Are justice and forgiveness compatible?
 - What does it look like for you practically to extend grace to your neighbors?

A People

- Who were the people Nehemiah and this chapter were concerned with?
- Who are the people around you who are alone, marginalized, or most vulnerable? ...We may need to think outside of the box in terms of our immediate social world... perhaps think about this: who are those who are socially marginalized in the workplace?
 - Read Lk. 16:19-31 and discuss the story.

A Pattern and A Power

- The pattern of justice is relief, development, and reform. How are these represented in Nehemiah fighting to give the people back their land?
 - Where does God want you/us to stand for justice?
 - The power of justice has to come from the Lord or the efforts will die. Fear, guilt, or shame will only compel for so long. How is God nudging you to pray because of this message?

Prayer

The heart of Nehemiah and this story of justice began with months of prayer. It’s easy to think of Nehemiah as a man of action and forget the prayer. Take time as a group to pray for justice. Consider starting near (pray for family, neighbors, coworkers), extend to LA, extend beyond Los Angeles and pray for justice throughout the nation and the world. For this week’s prayer guide click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Generous Service

Mark and Rachel in Nagoya, Japan

Mark and Rachel Kim, with their three young children, moved to Nagoya, Japan just four months before the pandemic hit. Mark and Rachel aren’t pastors. They don’t speak Japanese. They are answering God’s call to minister to the people of Nagoya, Japan. This commitment to long-term missions has come after 10 years of praying and searching and waiting for the right opportunity.

As of writing this, Japan is in its fourth “State of Emergency” since the pandemic started. Please join in praying for Mark and Rachel and their children Naomi, Micah, and Matteo. Please pray that COVID numbers would decrease and pray for the health and safety of Naomi as she goes to school. We praise God that Mark and Rachel have been able to receive a vaccine! To learn more about Mark and Rachel and to partner with them financially, follow this link: <https://www.mtw.org/missionaries/details/kim-mark-rachel>.