

(02-16-25) The Means of Grace (6)

Seeking Justice

Micah 6:8 & Isaiah 1:17

As we continue our sermon series, “The Means of Grace,” I’d like to remind you of the meaning of the means of grace. “The means of grace refer to the ways through which we can receive God's grace. In other words, they are methods for experiencing God's loving and transforming presence, which helps us grow in our faith and deepen our relationship with Him. As we engage with these means, we are renovated to embody Christ's character within us, aided by the Holy Spirit.”

The means of grace we are going to explore today is “**Seeking Justice**.”

When I was a student pastor at a church in Glendale, CA, the senior pastor and the church members created a special slogan that became the church’s identity for missionary work and mobilization. The slogan was: “**We are the church that brings joy to God’s heart.**”

Today’s scripture teaches us that doing justice brings joy to our God.

“**He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?**” (Micah 6:8 NRSV). It is about God’s desire for us. It is about what God wants us to do as His covenant people. It is about what our neighbors must see in and through us - **Doing justice.**”

Then what is justice?

“Biblically, “justice” means “to make right.” Justice is, first and foremost, a relational term — people living in the right relationship with God, one another, and the natural creation. From a scriptural point of view, justice means loving our neighbor as we love ourselves and is rooted in the character and nature of God. As God is just and loving, so we are called to pursue justice and live in love.” (Definition from worldvision.org/blog/social-justice-really-mean)

We can find the phrase 'to make right' seven times in the Book of Numbers. It is used in the context of worship, referring to the cleansing of sins through sacrificial offerings to God. Thus, justice becomes our act of worship in the world.

“**So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**” (Genesis 1:27 NIV). All human beings are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), which means we are created as relational beings reflecting God’s nature as a Triune community. Each person has dignity from God, which must be respected and cared for. Also, God commands us, “**Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living**

creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28 NIV). Because we have God’s image in us, God allows us to take good care of His creatures as His stewards. That is justice - maintaining God’s creation, including humanity, as it was designed and purposed.

There are things we have to carefully consider as we practice justice as our means of grace.

First of all, justice without love is not justice.

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8 NRSV).

When we stand up against societal issues, we must remember that our efforts for justice, including social justice, should be rooted in our love for God and our neighbors. That is why “to love kindness” comes right after “to do justice.” In God, love and justice are inseparable. But to us, they can be easily separated. Justice and love always must go hand in hand.

“The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.” (Psalm 33:5 NIV)

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.” (Psalm 89:14 NRSV)

Justice without love is not true justice; it becomes cold and brutal legalism. Love devoid of justice is not genuine love but a sentimental indulgence that can cause harm and reinforce inequality.

Secondly, let justice shine through humility.

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8 NRSV).

We are called to reveal God’s justice, not our own justice. We are not the judge—God is our true judge. That is why we have to walk humbly with our God.

Humility makes justice solid and lasting. Without humility, justice can become oppressive and self-serving; with humility, it becomes compassionate, seeking not only to punish but to heal, not just to condemn but to uplift.

Last but not least, remember social holiness.

We must remember social justice must be firmly anchored to social holiness for the Kingdom of God. One of the major ideas that has upheld the Methodist movement is social holiness. This key theology of John Wesley emphasizes that the Christian faith must be expressed in the community through love, justice, and service. It is rooted in Wesley’s belief that personal piety and social engagement are inseparable. He said, **“The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no**

[holiness, but social holiness.](#)” For John Wesley, true holiness is not only about individual spirituality but also about transforming the world through acts of mercy and justice. While John Wesley never explicitly used the term “social justice,” he emphasized the importance of social holiness.

When we pursue social justice without holiness, our efforts can easily degrade into mere activism or social service. This can cause confusion about our distinctive missionary role in the world. Just as Israel was called to be God’s priestly Kingdom and holy nation (Exod. 19:6), we are also called to be God’s royal priesthood and holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). What does this mean for us? We are called to reveal God’s holiness to the world. For example, Moses was condemned by God because he failed to demonstrate God’s holiness to Israel when he angrily hit the rock twice to release water from it (Numbers 20:7-12).

That is why John Wesley’s personal holiness was always connected to his social holiness. During university, John & Charles Wesley and their Oxford 'Holy Club' visited the local prison and shared the Gospel message with them. John Wesley would visit the prison once a month to preach. He also invited the poor children from his neighborhood to tutor them in Oxford. Further, he founded schools for children from marginalized families, including one in his own home, and supported the Sunday School movement, which aimed to teach children to read and write, as well as instruct them in Christian principles. His educational efforts extended beyond Oxford and were part of his broader mission to educate the poor throughout England.

The early Methodists spoke out against slavery, smuggling, inhumane prison conditions, alcohol abuse, and child labor. Today, United Methodists work, march, and pray for racial justice, environmental care, and fair treatment for everyone.

Then, we can define social justice this way: [“Social justice is about our participation in God's loving and just actions to heal and restore His creation. It centers on demonstrating God's holiness, which is an expression of God's love for an unjust world. So every time we use our voice and influence to stand against injustices—whether it's human trafficking, human rights abuses, economic inequality, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, racism, malnutrition, or inadequate hygiene for infants and adults in any community—we, as a church, offer a glimpse of God's Kingdom. Without social holiness, there can be no true social justice.”](#)

Remember that justice and love are inseparable. We have to let justice shine through humility. Our commitment to social justice is about creating spaces that reflect the Kingdom in the world, and it must be firmly rooted in social holiness. We are called to demonstrate God’s holiness in everything we do.