

# Proverbs A La Carte: Justice

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Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0:00] And they broke into my office with the help of one Mary Nichols. And they dropped a note on my desk and put balloons on my chair. I'll just read you the two words of the card.

Dear Mike, be of good courage. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. And he closes, the Holy Spirit is your helper.

Or she. You are loved. It's good encouragement when your task on a day is to speak about biblical justice.

At such a time as this. So would you just join me one more time in praying to God. That he would give strength and clarity as we turn to God's word.

To see what God says about justice. Let's pray. God, we know that you're an all just God. And Father, would you now pour out your spirit upon us.

[1:06] That we may see what you have to say about justice. And that we would be a people. Formed by your words and will.

When it comes to doing justice to fellow image bearers. God, would you meet us now in your word. It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Well, over the last several months, I have had a number of people come up to me and ask if Christ the King Church is a quote unquote social justice church.

And that phrase social justice can be pretty confusing to some people. I had a conversation with a brother here just a couple weeks ago. And he was just clueless as to why this is such a problem. Because some people think when they hear social justice that it just means doing what's right for people in society. Other people, when they hear the words social justice together, what they hear is a threat upon the church of Jesus Christ.

[2:20] We all know and have seen how that phrase political justice, social justice, when it shows up online or in conversations, things can get hot really fast.

Here's why. In the early 20th century, mainline Protestant churches abandoned the one true gospel of Jesus Christ.

And that is that Jesus Christ was crucified and raised from the dead in order to save sinners from their sin and the wrath to come. Well, in the early 20th century, mainline Protestant churches abandoned that one true gospel.

And they replaced it with what's come to be called the social gospel. Don't worry about it, buddy. Let the spirit of God blow. But the point I was making was this. 20th century, mainline Protestant churches, they abandoned the one true gospel and they replaced it with a social gospel that was committed to the redistribution of wealth and power to people in need.

[3:46] And the idea there was salvation is an economic and political well-being. And Christ the King Church, we're nowhere close to that.

We are not going to advocate anything close to that because it's only the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings about the eternal well-being of every sinner. So this morning, here's my task.

I want to hashtag reclaim justice. Are we a social justice church? Well, it depends how you define it. But we are a biblical justice church just as we are a biblical gospel church.

Here's what you need to know about this morning's sermon. It's not going to answer all your questions. It may even raise more questions. But my goal is to reclaim the biblical understanding of justice so that we as a church can have clarity in the midst of confusion and that we can together move forward in confidence on mission for the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's my goal. That's my goal. And so here's a phrase you're going to hear. It goes something like this. God is just and we must be just like him.

[5:09] God is just and we must be just like him. And so let's start with a definition of justice. That's at the top of your notes. And here's what I'm going to work out of.

Biblical justice is the God-centered treatment of all people with dignity and fairness. Biblical justice is the God-centered, not man-centered, God-centered treatment of all people with dignity and fairness.

And what you'll see on your bulletins, the outline, four points to support that claim. God is just and we must be just like him.

So let's start off with point one. Biblical justice is God-centered. It starts and ends with a God of justice, an all-just God.

For us to be just, we must first see that biblical justice begins and ends with a just God. So let's talk about this just God.

[6:20] In Deuteronomy 32, verse 4, we just heard Billy read it. We read, The rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.

A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. There is a collection of words. And this collection of words, two words, particularly in the Old Testament, they get used of God.

Justice and righteousness. They're used to describe God's character and his conduct. And when we come across them, we see that this forms God's heart when it comes to doing what's right for people.

Listen to this. Psalm 33, 5. God loves righteousness and justice. Psalm 89, 14.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne. He's reigning on high. On a throne of righteousness and justice.

[7:31] Yes. Psalm 99 begins, The Lord reigns. And verse 4 continues, The king in his midst, in his might, loves justice.

You have established equity. You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Psalm 103, Brian read it. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.

Isaiah 9, this child born to us. Wonderful counselor. Mighty God, Prince of Peace. He will set up a government which will be no end.

And it will be marked by justice and righteousness. Jeremiah 9, 23, 24. Jeremiah 23, 5.

Jeremiah 33, 5. Justice and righteousness. So what do these mean? Justice comes from a Hebrew word that means to give people their due.

[8:34] To punish wrongdoing and to protect the rights of the vulnerable. It punishes wrong and it ensures rights.

That's the most basic sense of justice. And that this word righteousness, it's not so much of personal morality, though it does involve that.

What it really gets at is the day-to-day living of right relationships with God and others. So justice means giving people their due in right relationship with one another.

With God and others. For example, just think of the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments are just laws that are governing our relationship with God.

To be in right relationship with Him. And the following six commandments are just laws governing right relationship with one another. So we don't murder because it's unjust.

[9:36] When we talk about justice, biblical justice is God-centered.

And it begins with a God who is just, but it ends with a God who brings justice for all. There's been a day set. It's in God's calendar right now.

The day of judgment. And we're one day closer. And on that judgment day, all the injustice that God right now has seeing in all people everywhere, for all time, on that day, He will make all wrongs right.

Everything would be brought to light. All justice is meted out. Every mouth is silenced. No one on that day can say, God, that's not fair.

Perfect justice. What's important to realize is that there are some significant differences between the exercise of God's justice and human justice.

[10:47] God is impartial in all of His ways and His judgments. He is patient. He is forbearing injustice now. So that, this is 2 Peter 3.9, so

that more and more people can come into a right relationship with Him Through the just work of Jesus on the cross.

God is impartial. He's patient. And He's perfect in His judgments and His justice. We tend to be partial in our justice. Impatient in our justice.

Imperfect in our exercise of dignity and fairness. And here's what this means. For us to do justice. Means we must first seek the God of all justice. Proverbs 28.5 Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the Lord understand it completely.

Our understanding of justice comes from our seeking of the all-just God. He forms His mind in us.

[12:05] And what we begin to see is He is at the center of justice. He's the definer. It begins and ends with Him. So we reject a man-centered justice that can devolve into some kind of doing what's right in your own eyes.

And we press into God-centered justice. Seeking God and His word to do what's right in God's eyes. So here's my appeal to you at this end of this first point.

Brothers and sisters, When it comes to a God-centered treatment of all people with dignity and fairness, It begins with seeking an all-just God.

That's where we start. We begin with God. And let me urge you to this end. Would you ask this just God to search your heart to expose any injustice in you?

That's where we start. God is just. And we must be just like Him.

[13:20] Second point. Biblical justice values image-bearer equality.

Justice is grounded human justice in every human being being an image-bearer of God. Whether individual image-bearers or groups of image-bearers, Biblical justice treats all image-bearers of God with dignity and fairness.

And that comes from a passage in Genesis chapter 1 verse 27 where we read this. So God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him.

Male and female He created them. Both male and female are created individually in the image of God. So a man, His image-bearer isn't a better image-bearing because he is a man.

Nor is a woman bearing God's image less of an image-bearer because she's a woman. We're all image-bearers. And so God sees us with equal worth because we bear His likeness.

[14:32] All men and women everywhere. So the question becomes, what does it mean to be an image-bearer?

Well, there's two basic elements of us being image-bearers. First is this. Of all creation, men and women are uniquely created to be in relationship with God.

There's no other created being on the planet that was designed to be in relationship with God.

None. We were built for it.

We were designed for it. We get a hint of that in Genesis 3.8 when God came looking to walk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day in the garden. That's the kind of relationship God wants with us and created us for, designed us for.

But we're just not created to have a unique relationship with Him. We've been given a unique responsibility by God. And that is to represent Him on earth.

[15:35] To be fruitful and multiply for God. So what makes human beings image-bearers? We are created to be in relationship with God. And we are created to represent God on earth for the glory of His name.

And that gives us the biblical basis for the sanctity of life. That every human being bears God's image, whether in the womb or out of the womb or on the verge of death.

That every human being is an image-bearer of God and therefore has intrinsic value and worth. We are equal in God's sight.

Do you remember back in school when you learned what the greatest common denominator was? The greatest common denominator of every human being on the planet is that each of us, all of us, are image-bearers of God.

And that means we extend dignity and fairness to all. All of us. We can never say we don't have common ground with another human person.

[16:55] Because we're all image-bearers. And it's this sanctity of life that is the basis of justice. Treating all people with dignity and fairness.

So let me spell out some implications for us. We do justice to individuals. We show individuals' dignity and fairness.

Because they're image-bearers of God. And we know that they too will individually stand before God one day to give an account for every decision they made throughout their entire life.

Every human being is responsible for their decisions before God. They're held accountable by God for their sinful choices. Every human being is.

That helps us. Because we want to hold one another accountable. Because we realize each of us are going to need to stand before God someday to give an account for our lives.

[17:58] And I want you as well as me to stand before God someday and say, Lord Jesus, I did everything I could for the glory of your name. But it's just not limited to individuals.

Showing dignity and fairness extends to groups of image-bearers who are vulnerable. Uniquely vulnerable.

There is a subset of image-bearers that it's a theme throughout the Bible. That God is particularly concerned that we treat justly. Scholars call this vulnerable group the quartet of the vulnerable.

They are orphans, widows, the materially poor, and the stranger. The stranger, back in the Old Testament, would be someone who's coming into ethnic Israel.

And they would have been an ethnic minority within the ethnic majority. So this opens up for us to understand that a stranger is just not some weirdo.

[19:14] There's someone unlike us. Someone on the outside. Someone coming in among us that may not fit. God's word, particularly in Proverbs, has quite a bit to say.

If you want to jot these down, in Proverbs chapter 23, 10 through 11, God says this about the orphan.

Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless. That's a reference to orphans. For the Redeemer is strong. He will plead their cause against you.

Do you see? God takes up the cause of the orphan. If God is just, we must be just like Him. And then in Proverbs 15, 25, we read this.

The Lord tears down the house of the proud, but maintains the widow's boundaries. Vulnerable. God has an eye to these groups, individuals and groups of the vulnerable.

[20:23] God is particularly concerned in the book of Proverbs with the materially poor. Of all the quartet, it's the poor that gets most reference in the book of Proverbs.

If you want to look at a passage now, Proverbs 14, 31, talks about poor people, materially poor, as being image bearers.

The poor and the wealthy are both, both share the same maker. I think that's 22, 2. What I'm trying to get at is there are uniquely vulnerable groups of image bearers within our society.

And God does not ignore them. He calls us to care for them, to show justice to them, to treat them with dignity and fairness.

In fact, God will hold each of us personally accountable for the way we treat the orphan and the widow, the poor and the outsider.

[21:33] As a church in the city, we are uniquely positioned to show justice to these people who are vulnerable.

I believe it's a privilege. Though it gets complicated and it gets messy. It's an honor. Every human being is an image bearer.

And every image bearer is personally accountable to the God of justice. And there are groups of image bearers uniquely vulnerable to exploitation.

And then being seen as somehow subhuman. Less than image bearers. And God says, no. Treat them all with justice, dignity, and fairness.

God is just. And we must be just like him. We must look to God's word and let God's word form what we think in terms of justice.

[22:46] Third, biblical justice is a path of the wise. I think we all realize that we live in a hyper extreme moment in time, in history.

There is this pressure that many of us feel to have to show your colors. Show what team you're on. What side are you on? What tribe are you with?

And people go extreme and they dig their heels in. Many people are fearful. Many people are confused.

Many people get angry. And what I want to tell you this morning is God has laid out a path for us to walk. A wise path of justice.

We go to God's word. We look to God and say, God, give us the wisdom. Give us the MacGyver wisdom to know what to do today. To know what to do in this season.

[23:54] Help us to live for you in our concern for all people. In Proverbs chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, we read this.

This is basically the intro to the book of Proverbs and tells you why you need it. To know wisdom and instruction. To understand words of insight.

To receive instruction in wise dealings. In righteousness, justice, and equity. The book of Proverbs shows us how to fear God and to be just.

Chapter 2, verses 6 through 9. For the Lord gives wisdom. Yes, amen. Lord, give us wisdom. For the Lord gives wisdom.

From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Whose lips are you looking to to figure this out? He stores up sound wisdom for the upright.

[25:05] He is a shield to those who walk in integrity. Guarding the paths of justice. And watching over the way of the saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity.

Every good path. There is a path to walk, brothers and sisters. A path of wisdom. There is a life to craft according to the fear of the Lord that is just and right.

Proverbs chapter 8. Lady wisdom tells leaders. Leads them in justice.

What's up with this path language? Path language. The Bible uses path and way language to describe how to live your life.

Walking on the way. Walking in on the path. The path of wisdom. The path of blessing. So the question that we really need to ask ourselves is.

[26:14] What's our next step? As we trust God and fear him. See him at the center of all things. The definer of all things. How do we walk the path of wisdom when it comes to justice?

Treating all people with dignity and fairness. I know very well that we all have different spheres of relationships.

We live in different neighborhoods. We work in different workplaces. We send our children to different schools. We have different spheres of relationships. So I'm aware of that.

But if you find yourself somewhat insulated or isolated from the orphan. From the widow.

From the materially poor. And the stranger. Ethnic minorities. If you found yourself somewhat insulated or isolated. You know what?

[27:14] You hear a sermon like this and you can start feeling guilty about your situation. Or you start asking a question. I'm not sure if this is the church I should be going to. Well let me assure you.

This is the church you should be going to. And here's why. Exposure. Exposure.

To people. Who are vulnerable. Groups of people in need. We don't avoid that. As followers of Jesus. We move to that.

As followers of Jesus. Exposure. To difficult situations. Exposure. Will complicate your life. But it will also enrich your life.

It will expand your heart. With God's heart. For all people. For all people. So if you find yourself in a position.

[28:19] Where you feel like you kind of live on an island a little bit. Isolated from people in need. People in hardship. Take a step.

Here are two steps you can take. Two places you can step into. In our life in the church right now. That you would be welcomed. It would be a great way to wade in.

On Wednesday afternoons. At our building. We have a mentoring program. It's run by Jasmine Aldrich. Jasmine's right here. Will you raise your hand, Jasmine?

And this after school mentoring program. Is one of my favorite things. That happen at our church on a weekly basis. We have volunteers coming in. And setting up shop.

Building relationships with children. Women who are living in very difficult situations. Very difficult neighborhoods. You know how before I was talking to you about the quartet of the vulnerable.

[29:19] We've got orphans and widows. And the poor and the stranger. Do you know what happens? One person can embody three of those vulnerabilities.

You can have functional orphans. Who are poor. And are outsiders. It makes it very difficult for them. But what I love about King's Place.

Is what I hear from the volunteers. Over and over again. I hear from the volunteers at King's Place. Yeah this is hard. But it's changed my life. I don't see the world the same.

What I also love about King's Place. They preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every week. Jasmine Aldrich.

You and your team. Keep preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every week at King's Place. If you're interested. Talk to Jasmine. Another place.

[30:17] Is on Sunday mornings. Early on. We have a breakfast. It's led by Steve Bickle. Bick. Where are you Steve? There he is. Brother. Ohio State Buckeye fan.

Yes. God's more important. But Steve gives leadership to a breakfast. In which we are feeding. People who are homeless. People who are marginalized. People who are in need. Gospels preached there. And I guarantee you. If you volunteer for one month.

Your life will be changed for the better. So if you're interested in that. Talk to Steve. Steve Bickle.

Over there. What I'm trying to help you with. Is take a step. We got places you can step.

Take a step. Take a step on the path of wisdom. The path of justice. There's another place where you can take a step. Our Sunday morning gatherings.

[31:12] In our building. When we come together. It is an opportunity for us all. It is an opportunity for us all. To be walking in a just path together. Showing. Showing.

Dignity and fairness to all people who come into our building. We have noticed. We have noticed. That many people come to our building. They are welcomed.

And they never come back. What we want to see is a culture shift. That is what we are praying for. A culture shift. In which people come to our building.

They feel like they can belong. And they never leave. We are praying for that. We believe God has to do a work. In order for that to happen.

But here is your part. In that. Every Sunday morning. When we gather. It is an opportunity for you to. Move to strangers. Move to people unlike you.

[32:11] Move to the materially poor. Move to people. And get to know them. Build relationships with them. Even. Invite them over to your home for lunch afterwards.

Have conversations about. With them when you. Hear their story. There is this. Video series out there. That we have used at the church. It is called Helping Without Hurting. And in this series. Numerous materially poor people. Are interviewed. And they are asked this question. What is it that you need most? What is it that you feel most acutely? Do you know what they say? It has nothing to do with their material situation.

It is feeling like they do not have a voice. It is feeling like. They do not have worth. Dignity. Part of. Helping people feel belong. Is to. Dignify them. So that they can see themselves. As being part of our church. It is. It is.

[33:14] It is a step we must take together. There is other steps that we must take. We must take steps of justice for the unborn. Unborn. This is another group of vulnerable image bearers in our country.

If you want to learn. Think about the unborn in terms of the Proverbs. Look at Proverbs 24. 11 and 12. Look at that. And think about the unborn in our country right now.

Crossway. There is a walk for life happening in a couple Saturdays. Renee Seymour. Would you raise your hand? Renee Seymour is back there. If you are interested in taking a step that way. Talk to Renee. Another step that you can take.

Is taking a step in terms of. What it means to. Treat the poor justly. Let me encourage you along these lines. Start loading up.

Your mind and your heart. With what the Bible says. About the poor. Proverbs are. It is full of it. Proverbs 14.31. Proverbs 17.5.

[34:23] Proverbs 21.13. And then there are four verses in 22. 22.2. 22.9. 22.16. And 22.22. Then you want to go to James chapter 2.

Which gives a warning about showing partiality. To the rich over the poor. Take a step on the path of justice.

When it comes to the poor. You can take a step on the path of justice. When it comes to caring for orphans. We have a number of families in our church. That our foster families.

Foster parents. They've opened their homes up. To these children who are vulnerable. I am so proud of them. I am so glad to be associated with them.

So. So. So Bill and Jerilyn. Keep preaching the gospel. To those foster care kids. That are coming into your home. AJ and Hannah. Keep preaching the gospel.

[35:20] Opening your home. Wanda. Keep going sister. For those of us. We can come around them. Support them. Encourage them. Give them breaks.

There's some paperwork involved. But we can do that. I can go on. But there is an elephant in the room. What does doing justice look like?

When it comes to the shooting of Jacob Blake. What does that mean? How do we seek to fear the Lord. And seek him.

And do justice. In a season like this. Where we're waiting for this investigation. To come to a close. And hear the results. And we all have this sense of. We're not sure what's going to happen.

Right? Well when it comes to this situation. In our city. We go to God first. We seek the Lord.

[36:21] Who gives justice. And we understand it completely. We're not going to lean on our own understanding. In all of our ways. In this way. We're going to acknowledge God.

And trust that he's going to make straight our paths. But what it does mean is this. We pray for Jacob Blake and his family. We pray for them. They're image bearers.

Pray that God would use us to draw them to himself. We pray for Rester Shesky. The officer who did the shooting. We pray for him. We pray for mercy for him.

That God would reveal himself to him. We pray for the investigative teams. Who are involved in gathering the facts. Oh God. May all the facts come to light in this situation.

So it becomes clear and transparent for all. That justice was done. We're praying against a miscarriage of justice. That's what we pray for.

[37:21] This is very delicate stuff. But God has a path for us to walk. Brothers and sisters. The question is not what is politically right.

The question is what is biblically right. That's what we do. That's what we pray for. God is just. And we must be just like him. There's another step I want you to consider taking. It's a step I've been taking over the last several months. And it's to ask the black and brown image bearers in your life.

What they are thinking about all this situation. And you don't raise it in order to make a case. Raise it in order to listen. To understand.

To empathize. To gain insight. So that we can do justice. Whether it's the cause of the unborn.

[38:24] Whether it's the cause for the poor. Whether it is helping orphans or widows. Whether it's doing justice. And seeking justice for ethnic minorities. There may come a time.

Where God calls us. To Proverbs chapter 31. Eight and nine. 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.

Brothers and sisters. This is God's call for us. To do what's just for all. I know there's a lot more we can talk about here.

Oh God give us wisdom as we walk the path of justice. Now finally. For doing biblical justice. And declaring the biblical gospel. Are not at odds.

[39:35] I've spent a considerable amount of time this morning. Talking about what biblical justice is. I haven't spent much time. Talking about the biblical gospel. Are we a social justice church?

I don't know. We're going to be a biblical justice church. And we're going to proclaim. The biblical gospel. God's not requiring us to choose.

Brothers and sisters. He's not requiring us to choose. Either declare the biblical gospel. Or do biblical justice. God is calling us to do both.

Declare the biblical gospel. And do biblical justice. It's not either or. It's both and. But we are not naive. We know that there's the possibility of drift.

Of losing focus. On what matters most. That of first importance. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That God became a man.

[40:39] He died for sinners on a cross. And was raised to deliver us from the wrath to come. And reconciling us to himself. God. So here's what we must do moving forward.

To protect ourselves against any kind of drift. We've got to prioritize the gospel. That's why we keep the great commission in front of us.

Jesus giving us our marching orders. To go make disciples of all nations. All peoples. All peoples. And when we make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The way we do that is by proclaiming Jesus Christ. To call all people to follow Jesus. And all that he commanded. We call them to repent and to believe.

To become a follower of Jesus. Means that you will follow Jesus. In the path of wisdom. And he will call you to do justice.

[41:39] For all people. Treating people with dignity and fairness. We got to prioritize. Preaching the gospel. Because it alone.

Addresses all of mankind's greatest problem. And that is our separation from God. And being under his just wrath. The gospel. Is God's just work in Christ.

To forgive us of all of our sin. And to make us right. With him. But we also got to protect the gospel. And here's how we protect the gospel.

We protect the content. Of the gospel. What it is. What it is. And what it's not. Jesus Christ died. And was raised for sinners.

Gospel. Social justice. Not the gospel. And we need to protect ourselves from. Emphasis.

[42:37] Over emphasizing a good thing. Over the most important thing of all. We got to. We got to protect ourselves against that.

We got to pay attention to what we're saying. We don't need to choose. Between doing biblical justice. And preaching the biblical gospel. But we do need to prioritize.

And protect the gospel. Above all else. It alone. Is God. Able. To remain just. And justify sinners. God is just.

And we need to be just like him. Biblical justice. Is God centered. Biblical justice. Is image bearer. Values image bearer. Equality. Biblical justice. Is the path.

Of the wise. And biblical justice. And the biblical gospel. Are not at odds. We do both. Prioritizing. The message.

[43:35] Which is God's power. Unto salvation. Brothers and sisters. Christ the King Church. We as a body. Are in motion. Moving forward.

On gospel mission. Making disciples of Jesus. Because preaching Christ. And doing justice. Is part of that.

Let's pray. God in heaven. God would you. Help us. As a church. To walk.

Through this time. In a way. That is pleasing to you. That honors you. That is seeking to obey your words. And your directives.

God would you make us. A people. Who don't overreact. One way or the other. But God we by faith. Walk the path.

[44:31] You have set out for us. In Jesus name. Amen.