

1 Peter 2:21-25

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Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0 : 00] You remember solemn things. As we stop and we look around the world that we live in, it is an appropriate solemnity that we feel.

We read the news. A young man killed walking through a gated community. A girl in Ukraine repeatedly abused by her classmates.

Children dying of starvation in Sudan. Victims of ethnic warfare. Young girls from impoverished families sold into the sex slave trade in the world.

We live in a dark world and we see this injustice and it bothers us. It evokes from us a longing for justice.

For a just world where wrongs are punished and where things are made right. And not only do we see this on a global scale, but perhaps slightly more trivially, in our own lives, you have been passed over for a promotion on account of office politics.

[1 : 23] You were swindled in that eBay purchase that you purchased, that you bought, but never was delivered. Your car was sideswiped in the parking lot.

No note was left. We long for justice. We long for things to be made right. Whether trivial or globally significant.

And yet, in this longing for justice, there is another current that runs through our hearts. Our sense of justice, I fear, is proportional to the degree that we see ourselves as right.

That is, when we see ourselves as in the wrong, when justice might come down on us, we are shy to demand justice.

We are instead longing for leniency. Instead longing that we might be excused.

[2 : 33] Think it's not true? If you're driving down I-95 tomorrow, everyone's going 70, so are you. The speed limit's 55.

Suddenly you look up in your rearview mirror. The lights are flashing. The cop pulls you over. Do you rejoice?

Thank God that there is a state trooper upholding safety in our country and in our city. I'm so glad that he is keeping me from contributing to an unjust society.

No. No, I don't think so. We think, maybe we'll get off this time. Maybe he'll just let us off with a warning. Does he know I'm late to meet my mother?

Whatever the excuse is. Maybe he'll be lenient. And even if you don't agree with all the particulars of the examples that I've given, I think it's true that in our hearts, the human heart, there is both this longing for justice and yet this longing for leniency.

[3 : 45] We demand justice for others, but are reluctant to demand it when we would find justice coming down on us. And this then comes into play in our relationship with God, doesn't it?

We want God to make the world right. We ask him, why? Why, God? Is this world so broken? Why is there so much evil and suffering? Why is there so much unrighteousness?

But we don't want God to be that God when we are on the wrong side. We want God to be kind, lenient, to excuse our failures.

We want him to be the kindly grandfather who will just overlook it, will let us off. Today is Good Friday.

And God was up to remarkable things on Good Friday. For on that first Good Friday, Jesus died. And his death was at the same time the greatest injustice that has ever happened in the history of the world.

[4 : 58] And yet also the greatest upholding of justice that has ever happened. In the world. If you want to turn with me in your Bibles, page 1015, the book of 1 Peter, chapter 2, the passage I'll be referring to tonight is 1 Peter 2, starting in verse 21.

The context is about Paul's instructions to those who are suffering and perhaps suffering very unjustly. But he goes from his application to their lives to speak of Christ. Starting in verse 21 of chapter 2. For this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you may follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. [6 : 26] By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but now have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Let me pray. Lord, we thank you for your word and that in it you make yourself known to us. And God, I pray that you would help us tonight see, Lord, the wonder of what you have done in the death of Christ on the cross.

Open our eyes, we pray. Open our hearts, Lord, by your spirit that we might not only hear, but understand and believe your word tonight.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. In all the familiarity of the story of Good Friday, it might be easy to overlook the thought that the killing of Jesus was the greatest injustice in the whole world. And it was this because Jesus was an innocent man. Not simply that he was innocent of the particular charges of being a political agitator.

[7 : 44] No, it was because, as 1 Peter 2.22 says, Jesus committed no sin. His life on earth was characterized by love, service, healing, teaching.

He confronted empty religious actions. He called out social injustice. He never did wrong. Never. He was always obedient to God.

And I think it might be hard, as I was reflecting on this, it's hard to imagine someone who is truly, perfectly, without sin.

Someone who always does the right thing in every circumstance, whose every word is from love, whose every action is for good.

And not only are, is, was Jesus' actions always good and right, but his heart motivations.

[8 : 56] There was no greed. There was no envy. There was no jealousy. There was no self-promoting in an unrighteous way.

Jesus was without sin. And he was killed. The execution of an innocent man would cause an outcry today.

Newspaper headlines would rise up. 24-7 news would have endless discussions and debates, decrying this as the lowest point of humanity, calling out the decline of our civilization and our world. Jesus' death was so terrible it would have been front page news. But there was no outcry that day. The soldiers beat him and bowed in false homage to him.

The crowds which, yay, a week ago had praised him and acclaimed him as the coming king mocked him. The religious leaders who orchestrated his arrest taunted him to save himself.

[10 : 22] Even the thieves dying justly for their sin reviled him. and Jesus even then did not respond in kind.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten. He did not cry for his rights. He did not resist the terrible execution.

The greatest injustice the world has ever seen. Only finally he cried to his father, my God, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

An innocent man crying out at the depths of the greatest injustice that this world has ever seen. And it leads us to ask the same question, why? Why would this injustice happen? What was God doing? It is because the death of Jesus was also the greatest expression of God's justice that the world has ever seen.

[11 : 47] This great injustice by all accounts was in God's mind also the greatest expression of justice. How does this work?

What does that mean? 1 Peter 2 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that is meaning the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds, you have been healed.

The death of Jesus is on account of our sins, our sins that justly require death. And so on Good Friday, we must face this sobering reality.

It is our sin that puts Jesus on the cross. It is our rejection of God, our refusal to honor him, our refusal to worship him as he deserves.

It is our infallible tendency to place ourselves in the center of our lives to make ourselves God. It is our desire for pleasure and comfort and ease that drives us to live uncontrolled lives when we spend our money, our passion, our time pursuing the high of food, drugs, sex, entertainment.

[13:17] It is our sin expressed in the petty unkindnesses, the undercurrent of envy and greed that drives us to treat people as means to an end.

It is our sin showing itself in our commitment to our own importance, leading to comparison and arrogance and our tendency to scorn.

At the very core of it, it is like the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden, rejecting God as the sovereign King and Lord, choosing instead to live life apart from the creator and giver of life.

And it is a great offense a cosmic wrong against the creator. It is our sin in the pettiness of our days. It is our sin in our rebellion against God. It is our sin in our murderous, selfish, pleasure-seeking hearts.

[14:28] sins. It is the same sin that drives the sex trafficker and the genocidal insurgent that drives us.

And the Bible says that the wages that is the earned outcome of sin is death. And so every human being upon their death receives their just desert.

And God is right in doing so. In fact, God is good in doing so. For, in bringing sinners to death, to justice, for their rebellion, he is preventing them from living forever and perpetuating and perpetrating their sin in the world.

and so the penalty of death for sin is good and right. It is God in his justice.

And so, in fact, we know that it is better to have a just God than a lenient God who would excuse our sin. Because if he excused our sin, he might excuse the sin of sin.

[15:53] To pick an easy example, someone like Hitler. And that would be a tragedy. We want God to be just, but if he is really that, how can he also then, not also, simply judge us?

How can we be reconciled to God? How can we be saved from this judgment? How can we be restored to a relationship with this creator God?

How can God accept us at all? As Romans 3.26 says, what happened at the cross happened to show God's righteousness at this present time so that he might be both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus Christ?

And if I might insert in there, to be the justifier of the ungodly sinners who place their faith in Jesus Christ. The glory of Good Friday is that in its injustice, an innocent man dying a horrible death, it is justice for Jesus offered himself for us.

He did not need to die for his sins because he had none. And so he could die for us. In the outworking of God's eternal plan, Jesus said, I will go.

[17:25] I will take on their sin. I will sit under that judgment, the wrath of the Father judge. I will die suffering separation from God and from life.

I will do this and by my doing this, their sins will be judged justly without them having to die. He did this for you and for me.

He did this that we might be forgiven of our rejection of God. He did this that we might be justified, made right before God and restored to a relationship with him.

He did this that we might be healed. he did this that we might gain new life. And he did this for all that he will call to have faith in him.

And so he calls us to believe. to believe in this Jesus, to believe that this grand injustice was also great justice, whereby God would be both just and the justifier of sinners like you and me.

[18:50] And so, in closing, as we consider Good Friday, let us consider how terrible our sin is. Let us not move on too quickly to the hope of redemption, but let us soberly recognize, remember, and feel the weightiness of our sin.

For God to forgive us of this sin, it took the greatest injustice the world has ever known. And let us consider the justice of God.

We would not want God to simply overlook or excuse our sin. For there would be no hope that the world could be made right. There would be no judgment on genocide or murder, sex trafficking, and rape.

There would be no righting of wrongs. Let us be thankful that God does not give us what we want, which is leniency, but gives us what we need, which is justice. But finally, let us consider that God gives us better than what we want.

He is just at an infinite cost to himself so that he might extend grace, mercy, forgiveness to us.

[20 : 07] And let us consider that this is what is happening on Good Friday, the immense mercy and love of Jesus Christ for us. For this purpose, he came to save sinners from us, to deliver us from the darkness, darkness of our sin and the darkness of our world into his glorious kingdom, to rescue us from our plight of being under God's righteous wrath against us, to make us born again to a living hope in Jesus Christ who loved us and died for us.

It's Good Friday. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Oh God, how can we fathom, Lord, the immense thing that you have done this day that we remember the death of Jesus on a cross.

God, how great a God you are. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. ■ How deep is your love.

How wide is your grace to sinners like us. How deep is your love, how wide is your grace.

[21 : 48] that he would do this that he would suffer such injustice for us that you might be both just and able to save us we pray these things in Jesus name Amen