

SHOWING FAIRNESS

Ten Values for God's People

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

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Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal." If we love the LORD our God with all of our heart, mind, and soul - then we are keeping the first 5 commandments. If we love our neighbor as ourselves - then we are keeping the last 5 commandments. The "shall not"s simply teach the Golden Rule - **"Do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law"** (Matthew 7:12). However, Christians are to live beyond the Law. Jesus fulfills the Law and calls us beyond "not stealing" to acting fairly...to show and to value fairness in the midst of an unfair world.

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW UNFAIRNESS?

BECAUSE GOD GIVES US THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE Deuteronomy 11:26 **"I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse."**

Made in God's image, Humans have the freedom to make moral choices. You can choose between right and wrong...that's the good news. The bad news is there are consequences to our choices. And we often make dumb, selfish choices where innocent people get hurt and that's unfair. God wants people who choose to love Him, not forced to love Him; people who choose to do what's right and good, not forced to do what is right and good. God could have made us like marionettes where He pulls the strings and we do all the right things. But you can't say you love somebody unless you have the choice to not love. You can't say you are good unless you have the choice to be bad. In order to give us the freedom to choose to love Him, God has also given us the freedom to not do so.

BECAUSE GOD'S GOING TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS ONE DAY Ecclesiastes 3:17 **God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked...**

Today is not the end of the story. The final chapter has not been written. The books have not been closed. God has not balanced the books yet. Some day is going to be a judgment day where all of us stand before God and give an account of what we did with what He gave us...including what we did with His Son Jesus. God is going to right the wrongs then and justice will be meted out with fairness. There is going to be a day of accounting where each of us answers to God. God is a God of justice. People get away with doing evil all the time. Rights are violated, injustices occur, people are treated unfairly, people are killed, and all kinds of horrible things happen...and justice never seems served. It would be eternally wrong for someone like Adolph Hitler, who put 6½ million Jewish people to death, to get away without punishment. God assures us, there will be justice.

BECAUSE UNFAIRNESS SHOWS WE NEED A SAVIOR Ecclesiastes 3:18 **God tests (humans) so that they may see that they are like the animals.**

Without God, humans tend to start acting like animals. Our nature is basically selfish. We want to think we're basically good. We'll admit we have some faults, but we don't want to call it - sin. "I'm not perfect, but I'm no sinner!" So God says, "Ok, I'll step back and let human nature take its course in the world. We'll see what happens when God isn't in the picture." Friends, if you want to see that picture - just watch the news. God says, "You will see that you really do need a Savior." CS Lewis called it God's "severe mercy." One day when you stand before God and God says, "Let me look at your life" you're not going to want justice. You're going to want mercy. Thank God He doesn't give us what we deserve. If He did, none of us have a chance of getting into heaven because its perfect and we're not.

But Jesus is perfect...and he satisfies the judgment of God upon our sin...He saves us from us.

BECAUSE UNFAIRNESS CAN BUILD CHARACTER Romans 5:4 **Suffering produces perseverance which produces character..**

Suffering does not automatically produce character. It only produces character when you choose to respond to it in the right way. I know people who have suffered greatly and have no character at all. They're bitter, cynical, shriveled heart humans. Why? Because they didn't let God use it. They would not let God into it. They blame God instead of getting the balm of God. Instead of becoming better, they became bitter. Friends, character is forged by the refiner's fire...in the difficult times of life.

WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO DO WHEN WE FACE INJUSTICE?

ACCEPT GRACEFULLY 1 Peter 4:12-13 **Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.**

Christians, don't be surprised when people treat you unfairly. Jesus said it's going to happen. **"In this world you will have trouble."** (John 16:33) We live in a fallen world. You cannot prevent people from hurting you, but you can choose your response. Know God can use whatever you are going through for His purpose. So, live in grace - and live with grace.

RESPOND LOVINGLY Matthew 5:44 **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**

When somebody hurts you, they expect you to retaliate...to seek revenge. Jesus says, "I want you to do the exact opposite." Instead of returning bad for bad, God says, "I want you to take the moral high ground and return love to the very people who hurt you, who are unfair to you." Why? Because God tells you to...and because it keeps them from controlling you. Booker T Washington once said, "I will never allow another man to control my life by allowing him to make me hate him." Isn't that powerful? I'm not going to let you control my emotions through resentment or hatred. So I'm going to choose to respond in a loving way. Does that mean you allow injustice? On the contrary, we are to lovingly seek justice. Proverbs 16:17(LB) **The Lord demands fairness in every business deal.** So even when everybody else around you is unfair, you be fair. Even when everybody else around you is ripping off each other, you maintain your integrity. You take the moral high ground. You be fair. Like that great theologian Spike Lee said, "Do the right thing!"

WAIT EXPECTANTLY 1 Peter 2:19 **It is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God...**

When you are going through an unjust period, remember God is on your side. **For the LORD is a God of justice** (Isaiah 30:18). God hears your cry, sees your pain, knows you were hurt or put down. And God has the ability to turn negatives into positives. It is kind of like photography. You start with a negative, but you can develop it into a positive. With the old cameras, when you took a picture, you didn't have a picture - but a negative. How do you turn a negative into a positive? You shine a light through it onto some photographic paper. You have been dealt some negatives in life. But when you shine the light of God's love through your circumstance then you begin to see what God is doing. You see God is working on your character. You can develop a beautiful picture with the light of God's love in your life. If you don't - you can stay negative...bitter, cynical, sarcastic, and mean spirited. Life in abundance is rich in color...including the dark and difficult times. We don't need an explanation to get on with life. All I need to know is: God loves me, God has my best interest at heart, God has a purpose, God is going to settle the score, and God is going to bless those who are in Christ. Life is not fair, but God is good and God is just. In closing, 2 Corinthians 4:17 **For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.** Amen.