

“Wisdom and Justice”

Selected Proverbs

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This morning we are going to survey the book of Proverbs and learn about wisdom and justice...

Justice, as we understand it from God’s Word, is rooted in the character of God...God is just and always does what is just...justice is all that is in accord with righteousness and truth...justice includes the practices of honesty, impartiality and the protection of the weak and powerless...it is the right use of power, the right use of government, the right use of law, and the right use of money and resources...justice is pictured as a straight path while injustice is pictured as a path which is crooked...

There are all kinds of injustices in the world today, as there has been since the fall of man into sin...partiality, exploitation, abuse, lying, cheating, stealing, oppression, racism, sexism, slavery and human trafficking, terrorism, and genocide...these are but a few of the ugly and bitter fruits of injustice...but to truly understand the fruit of injustice, we must first understand the root of injustice...and the root of all injustice is found in mankind’s sin and rebellion...mankind’s sin and rebellion has brought with it injustice and along with injustice has come untold suffering...

In these times, we all need to be reminded what God’s word has to say about justice and injustice...and so, with Solomon as our teacher, *we are going to learn five lessons for living justly in an unjust world...*

Proverbs 1:1–3¹ The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: ² To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, ³ To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;

Proverbs 1:7⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Justice is rooted in wisdom and wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord...and so it shouldn’t shock us to see so much injustice in the world today, because we know there is so little fear of the Lord...

If we would grow in love for justice and a pursuit of justice, then we must grow in the fear of the Lord...to love what He loves and to hate what He hates...

1. God is just and loves justice

Justice is practical...it’s not some ethereal concept...it has application for our everyday lives...and one of the ways we see justice fleshed out in Proverbs is through the prohibition of a false balance an false scales...and in this practical act of justice, we also see God’s love of justice...

Proverbs 11:1¹ A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.

-God delights in an accurate scale, and a correct measure...because God loves the truth!

Another area in which people might deceive and cheat others, was with regard to land....
Proverbs 22:28²⁸ Do not move the ancient boundary Which your fathers have set.

-God delights in an accurate scale, and a correct measure...because God loves the truth! So don't rip people off by altering the scales or measuring a bit more or bit less to your advantage, by padding your timesheet or fudging on your 1040! God delights in accurate scales, correct measure, an honest timesheet and a correct tax form...

Proverbs 16:11¹¹ A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; All the weights of the bag are His concern.

Proverbs 20:23²³ Differing weights are an abomination to the LORD, And a false scale is not good.

God loves justice and He hates injustice...he loves correct measure and truthfulness and he hates lying, cheating, and stealing...

Proverbs 17:15¹⁵ He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

2. Justice brings blessing and injustice brings suffering

God has built into the world order the principle of sowing and reaping...cause and effect...generally speaking if an individual sows justice, they will reap blessing...likewise if a community or a country sows justice they will reap blessing...likewise, if the leaders of a nation sew injustice through corruption, then the people of that nation will suffer...

Proverbs 29:2² When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, But when a wicked man rules, people groan.

Proverbs 29:4⁴ The king gives stability to the land by justice, But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.

Proverbs 29:14¹⁴ If a king judges the poor with truth, His throne will be established forever.

Proverbs 14:34³⁴ Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to *any* people.

Proverbs 28:15¹⁵ *Like* a roaring lion and a rushing bear Is a wicked ruler over a poor people.

Proverbs 11:10–11¹⁰ When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, And when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting. ¹¹ By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, But by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.

So much of the world's suffering is caused not by natural disaster but by corrupt governments...rigged elections, bribery, embezzlement, partiality, corruption...these injustices are crippling to any society...

Proverbs 13:23²³ Abundant food *is in* the fallow ground of the poor, But it is swept away by injustice.

One of the reasons we as a nation have enjoyed great blessing has been the rule of law...that no person is to be above the law but all are subject to the law of the land...no that doesn't always work itself out perfectly, but by and large this has resulted in greater justice and therefor greater blessing...

The result of justice is blessing...and where there is significant injustice, there will be significant suffering...

Proverbs 24:23–25²³ These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good.²⁴ He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous,” Peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him;²⁵ But to those who rebuke the *wicked* will be delight, And a good blessing will come upon them.

3. The world in its rebellion is bent toward injustice

Solomon, very early on, lays out for his son the reality and temptations of living life in a sin-cursed world....

Proverbs 1:10–16¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. ¹¹ If they say, “Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause; ¹² Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, Even whole, as those who go down to the pit; ¹³ We will find all *kinds* of precious wealth, We will fill our houses with spoil; ¹⁴ Throw in your lot with us, We shall all have one purse,” ¹⁵ My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, ¹⁶ For their feet run to evil And they hasten to shed blood.

Proverbs 28:5⁵ Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the LORD understand all things. -they do not truly understand justice because they do not fear the Lord...those who seek the Lord understand all things...they have the right outlook and perspective on things...a perspective informed by the fear of the Lord and the Word of God...a biblical worldview!

Proverbs 21:7⁷ The violence of the wicked will drag them away, Because they refuse to act with justice. -injustice often stems from a stubborn refusal to submit to God and His ways...

The world is unjust because the world is bent toward sin and rebellion...sin and rebellion that expresses itself in selfishness, and selfishness is at the heart of all injustice...injustice is a failure to love our neighbor well...injustice is a failure to love our neighbor as our self...justice calls us to look out not only for our own interests, but also the interests of others....but the world is not naturally bent toward love of others...we are all naturally bent toward love of self...

4. God calls us as His followers to love and to seek justice

One of the results of fearing the Lord and walking in wisdom will be a growing love for justice and a seeking out of justice in this world...

Proverbs 2:5–9⁵ Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *He is* a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸ Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. ⁹ Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course.

Proverbs 21:3³ To do righteousness and justice is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice. -we will increasingly love what God loves, and hate what God hates...God loves justice and He hates injustice...

As we grow in the fear of the Lord, our valuing and love of justice will grow...

Proverbs 16:8⁸ Better is a little with righteousness Than great income with injustice. -This is a value statement!

As we grow in fear of the Lord, we will rejoice in justice!

Proverbs 21:15¹⁵ The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous, But is terror to the workers of iniquity.
-the wicked are afraid of justice because it just might come for them one day!

Justice means looking out for the interests of others...especially for those who are poor and powerless and without a voice...

Proverbs 31:8–9⁸ Open your mouth for the mute, For the rights of all the unfortunate. ⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously, And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

-how can we read this verse and not think of the great atrocity of abortion in our nation...every year over a million babies in this country are murdered by means of abortion, since 1973 and the nationwide legalization of abortion, over 58 million babies have been murdered in the womb...all in the name of choice and for the sake of sexual freedom personal convenience. Our nation, on this issue alone, is an unjust nation!

Proverbs 22:22–23²² Do not rob the poor because he is poor, Or crush the afflicted at the gate; ²³ For the LORD will plead their case And take the life of those who rob them.

-God cares for the poor and powerless...

-what are the implications of this verse for our view of the poor and our treatment of them...for our view of the homeless...and for our view of illegal immigrants...love of justice, love for the poor, and love for the powerless demands that we think about this from God's perspective and act in ways that are just...

5. Our hope for ultimate justice is in Christ alone

We must remember that God is sovereign over kings and presidents and prim ministers and nations...
Proverbs 21:1¹ The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

And while many clamor to have an audience with the powerful people of this world, we know that our only hope for justice is in the Lord...

Proverbs 29:26²⁶ Many seek the ruler's favor, But justice for man comes from the LORD.

You see, the truth is, we are sinners who deserve God's justice...in the gospel, God has not perverted justice at all...He has rather fulfilled justice by sending His son Jesus Christ to take our place...on the cross, Jesus, the sinless savior, received the just penalty that our sin's deserve...

Romans 3:26²⁶ ...He [God] would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In the gospel, God is both just and the justifier...He is just in that sin has been fully punished...He is the justifier in that He declares us righteous on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice and we are no longer guilty...this is what God offers to each one of us today!

You see, God has a great plan for justice in this world...and one day, perfect justice will be the order of the day, and not the exception to the rule...Jesus, God's own Son, is going to come again and rule over His kingdom with perfect justice...

Isaiah 9:6–7⁶ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 11:4–5⁴ But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. ⁵ Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

Isaiah 42:1, 3–4¹ “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations...He will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴ “He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth...

Revelation 11:15¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

It is then, truly, that “justice will flow down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)...even so, come Lord Jesus. Until then, may the Lord find us faithful and growing in our love for and practice of justice...