

Biblical

JUSTICE

A Daily Devotional



**CHRIST
CHURCH**
FOX CHAPEL

Biblical Justice Devotional

“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.”
Psalm 25:1

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”
John 6:68-69

This devotional booklet, as a companion to our Biblical Justice sermon series, is intended to help you come before the Lord of the universe in your prayer times, and seek his heart for justice in this world. There is so much confusion and conflicting ideas in the world right now about what justice is, and what justice requires. As Christians we have a responsibility to not let our media outlets or political parties teach us what justice is, but to turn instead to the God of justice, and be taught by him. He is the one who created this world, who witnessed sin and evil disfigure his beautiful creation, and has come in the flesh to set things right. His justice is eternal, unchanging, and satisfies every need of this broken world.

As Christians we must let the Word of God be our authoritative teacher about what God wills, and so we turn to the Scriptures to seek his face and his heart. Prayer should always be accompanied by Scripture, not only so that we might learn more about the Lord, what he has done, and his will for the world, but also so that we can use Scripture to pray these holy words back to him. In praying through Scripture we allow our minds and hearts to be formed by God’s Word so that we are transformed by his Spirit and conformed to his will.

This booklet is filled with Scriptures that are oriented around the biblical theme of justice. They roughly follow our sermon series topics: week one is focused on the nature of God, week two on the cross, and week three on our response. You are free to utilize this however you like, but here are some recommendations for how to use each day’s devotional:

- Get in a place of quiet, with minimal distraction. Turn off your phone or any other media around you.
- Breathe deeply and ask the Holy Spirit to be with you and to bless and guide this time.
- Read through the passage slowly, perhaps even multiple times. Often it can be helpful to underline or circle key words or phrases that stick out to you.
- Take your time in going through the questions and prayer prompts. It might help to journal or write in the margins.
- If the Holy Spirit leads you in a different direction with your prayers, listen to him! Don’t worry about following a pattern another human set for you—always trust that God loves you and wants to be in active relationship with you, and put him in charge of this time.

God bless you as you pray! I pray with the Apostle Paul, that *“according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”* (Eph 3:16-19)

Any questions or feedback can be directed to ben@christchurchfoxchapel.org

Monday

Week 1

Scripture

Exodus 34:4-8

So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.

What surprises you about the way in which the Lord reveals himself here?

Why does it matter that the Lord is gracious and merciful, but also does not clear the guilty? What does this mean for the world? For you?

Take some time to thank the Lord for his mercy and his justice.

Do you deserve his mercy, or his justice?

Take a minute to give thanks for his steadfast love and faithfulness, bowing down to worship him as Moses did.

Close with this prayer:

Holy, holy, holy God, whose mercy never fails and whose justice must be satisfied: I am humbled by the holy character of a God who is beyond my comprehension, and yet out of love reveals himself to me. I pray that you would show me more of your heart, and draw me so close to you in my day to day living that I could not help but to reflect your mercy, your justice, and your love for the world. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday

Week 1

Scripture

Psalm 146:5-10

*Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God,
who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,
who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the Lord!*

What is surprising to you about the character of God revealed here?

God's heart is to advocate and to serve those whom the world casts out, and who live on the margins of a society, loving those the world says are unlovely. Why do you think this might be? Why is his heart for these in particular?

Take some time to praise the Lord for his love for the unlovely. Does this ever include you?

How have *you* treated the unlovely and marginalized? If there is anything you should confess to the Lord, take a minute to do so now.

Take a few minutes to pray for the marginalized in our society: the poor, prisoners, the oppressed, the homeless, the mentally ill, the disabled. If there is anyone specific that comes to mind, bring them before the Lord in your prayer and ask Him to love and bless and set them free.

Ask the Lord to give you his heart for these people.

Close with this prayer:

Merciful Lord, Lover of the unlovable, Father to the orphan, Protector of widows, Freedom of the prisoners, Light to the blind: Forgive me for the times in which I have sided with the oppressor over the oppressed, and ignored the poor and marginalized out of my own self-interest. Help me to know Your heart, and let my heart break for the things that break Yours. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday

Week 1

Scripture

Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

This is a prophecy of the Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Knowing what you know about Jesus and what He came to do, how do you see these prophecies being fulfilled?

Take a few minutes to worship Jesus, using these names and traits. Meditate on each name given ("Wonderful Counselor," etc.) and praise Him for who He is.

What is your relationship to this government (or Kingdom) of Jesus the Messiah? What is your role in it?

You belong to this Kingdom and are a citizen of this government; but you live in a worldly society and under a government of man. Ask the Lord to guide you to navigate this tension with wisdom and grace.

What does the zeal of the Lord of hosts want to do in you? What does he want to do through you?

Close with this prayer:

Lord of hosts, whose zeal can work wonders beyond my ability to ask or imagine: thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus the Messiah, who came to establish your Kingdom among us. Strengthen me by your Holy Spirit to be a faithful and joyful citizen of this heavenly Kingdom, and guide me to know my role and purpose in this world. I ask this in the name of the Wonderful Counselor, Jesus my Lord. Amen.

Thursday

Week 1

Scripture

Revelation 21:1-8

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

This is a beautiful picture of the End, when the Lord will make a new heaven and a new earth. All will be made right, every injustice will be rectified, and there will be no more evil or pain or death. Imagine for a minute what this will be like. Are you looking forward to it? Do you believe in it?

In the midst of this glorious vision, there is also final judgment and punishment for those who have gone after wickedness and sin. This seems to be necessary for the new creation to come about. Does this trouble you? If so, why?

How does this end goal of God's justice reframe the issues of injustice we see around us now? How might you think about these issues differently? How might you act on them differently?

Look at the present tense of the phrase, "Behold, I am making all things new." Ask the Lord to show you how this might be so in your life, and in the world around you.

Pray and give thanks for this coming reality, and ask the Lord Jesus to come soon.

Close with this prayer:

Renewing and restoring God, who is bringing all of history to its culmination: by your Spirit help me to trust in these promises and look eagerly for this future. May all that I do be in cooperation with your work to bring about this renewal, and let me know the glimpses of it that you give even now. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Friday

Week 1

Scripture

Luke 18:1-8

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

In this parable, the Lord is presented in sharp contrast to the unrighteous judge. It is presumed that whereas this man is wicked, unjust, and lacking in sympathy, God is good, just, and cares about his people. If the widow's persistence in her petitions sways the unrighteous judge, how much more then should we expect of the righteous Judge? Reflect on God's goodness, holiness and justice, and his ability to change our situations, and give him thanks.

Jesus tells this parable for the purpose of helping us "always to pray and not lose heart." Have you ever failed to pray or been discouraged because of a situation causing you to lose heart? Have situations seemed too big for God to handle, or too big to give your time to pray for? If so, ask for forgiveness and repent before the Lord for these times.

Where do you see injustice right now, in your life or in the world? It might be helpful to write out a list, and examine your own feelings and reactions as you bring these before the Lord. Ask him to bring his justice into these situations.

Challenge: pick one issue, injustice, or problem from your list that is particularly important to you. Choose to be persistent in prayer, and bring this injustice before the Lord every day for the next week (perhaps set a reminder on your phone or calendar).

Ask the Holy Spirit for a greater increase in faith: to trust that God is powerful and good and loves you, and to trust him enough to never cease to pray and bring him your needs.

Close with this prayer:

Eternal and righteous Judge, who never fails to hear our prayers and to care for the injustices in our world: increase in me a love for prayer and a greater dependence on you. Help me to always trust in you, and you alone. In Jesus' name: Amen.

Monday

Week 2

Scripture

Genesis 3:11-15

[God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

In this passage we go back to the Fall—the source and root of all injustices we see in the world around us today. God’s first response to this devastating sin was to curse Satan, the enemy. This is the beginnings of God’s justice, which involves punishment, curse, and a prophecy of destruction. The curse does not fully satisfy God’s justice, but it points toward a time when it will be complete.

The offspring of the woman, who crushes the serpent’s head, is Jesus. This crushing is a fatal blow, and a victory for humanity. Spend a minute pondering how Jesus has done this.

God is committed to seeing justice done—for you, and for the world. Give him thanks for this, and ask how you can cooperate with him in that.

Think about the times that you have sinned, like Adam and Eve did. Now imagine that God’s anger and his curse at that sin are directed not to you, but to Satan. How does that change your perception of yourself and your sin?

Take some time to pray and ask the Lord to bring his foot down to crush the sin in your life. Pray for him to defeat the work of Satan in the world. Pray and ask for his justice to come quickly.

Close with this prayer:

Lord God, whose mercy goes deeper than the Fall: I thank you for this promise to conquer sin and Satan. For my own sins, let me never make excuses for them, but rather help me to put myself at your mercy. For myself and the world around me, bring your foot down on the works of sin, and bring about your justice. Through the name and work of Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.

Tuesday

Week 2

Scripture

1 Peter 2:22-25

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. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

There is a lot in this short passage! Read it again, slowly, asking the Spirit to guide your reading. What sticks out to you?

In this passage, it is presumed that we have sins that need bearing and wounds that need healing. Do you feel that is true for you?

There is an exchange here, and a profound substitution: He bore our sins instead of us, paid the price of death instead of us, and suffered so that we be healed and die to sin in order to live to righteousness. Spend a few minutes meditating on this substitutionary sacrifice.

These actions are in the past tense—Jesus already did bear your sins in his body, our wounds have been healed, we have returned to the Shepherd of our souls. Knowing that all is done, take a minute to give thanks to Jesus for the work that he has accomplished on your behalf.

Just as Jesus entrusted himself to the one who judges justly (God the Father)—will you? What will this mean for you?

Pray for the wounds you see in the world, and in those that you love. Ask the Lord Jesus to bring his healing, and to bring the justice for which he died.

Close with this prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, who lived the life I should have lived and died the death I should have died: thank you for your saving death on the cross. Thank you for healing me by your wounds and bearing my sins on your body, that I might know freedom and righteousness and peace. Let me never fail to look to your cross for my salvation and to leave all my sins with you, who never fail to bear them and cast them away. Bring your healing into this wounded world. In your name: Amen.

Wednesday

Week 2

Scripture

John 12:27-33

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus is speaking here of his death on the cross, when he is “lifted up.” It is for this purpose that he has come, and he speaks of it in terms of judgment (justice) against the world and the ruler of this world. We don’t often think about the cross in this way! What ideas or themes come to mind for you when you think of the cross? How does this passage challenge these? How does it complement them?

If we are saved by Jesus’ blood shed on the cross, how does his judgment against the world and against Satan (the ruler of this world) relate to your salvation?

Spend a few minutes praising Jesus and giving thanks for your salvation, and for the salvation of the world.

How do you want to see judgment done in the world? How about in you? How do you think that aligns with the judgment of the cross?

Pray for the injustices you see in the world around you, and ask for the Lord to bring his cross-shaped judgment.

Ask the Lord Jesus to draw you nearer to himself, and to draw the world nearer to himself, by the power of the cross.

Close with this prayer:

Righteous Judge, who came to bring true and desperately needed judgment: help me to hear the voice of the Father, seek your glory, and look to your cross as the only way of salvation for the world and for myself. Lead me to the cross, that I might place myself at your mercy and know your saving judgment. I ask this in your righteous name. Amen.

Thursday

Week 2

Scripture

Hebrews 2:14-15

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

This passage speaks of the purpose of the Incarnation, why Jesus took on flesh and blood and became a man: so that he could die as a human and yet because of his divinity destroy the power of death from the inside out. This is for our sake, who were in slavery to the fear of death, now brought into freedom through the cross.

Jesus became human in order to fight for you, destroying the devil and his works to bring you out of slavery into freedom. Meditate on this for a minute. How do you find yourself reacting or responding to this?

What does slavery to the fear of death look like? Are you trapped in this slavery? Do you know anyone who is? Pray for them, and for yourself.

Do you feel like you are regularly experiencing freedom in Christ? Freedom from fear, from sin, from the work of the devil? Pray for this, or pray for more of it.

Give thanks for this undeserved gift that comes from Christ's love for you.

Close with this prayer:

Victorious God, who has conquered death by death and destroyed the works of the devil: thank you for the everlasting life that you have won for us and invite us into freely. Thank you for redeeming me out of slavery and undoing all the evil and injustice in the world. Help me to not fall back into slavery or into fear, but to learn how to live in your victory daily. I pray in your powerful name. Amen.

Friday

Week 2

Scripture

Colossians 2:13-15

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

This passage shows the power of the cross working on multiple levels for our sakes: through it Jesus cancels our personal debts accumulated by our trespasses (sins), but he also disarms and conquers the rulers and authorities (most likely speaking of demonic powers) that have kept us bound. Meditate on these ideas for a minute, and give the Lord thanks.

There is legal, courtroom imagery here that we can enter into. Imagine that you are in a courtroom, and the prosecutor reads off a long list of offenses on your criminal record. The judge, rather than sentencing you, offers to take all your penalties on himself, and rips up your record sheet. Examine your own reactions and feelings in response to this.

Has justice been served here? Are you comfortable with this? If not, why?

Give the Lord humble thanks for his work on your behalf.

Where do you still see evil “rulers and authorities” at work, whether in your life or in the world? Ask Jesus to disarm and defeat them. Consider committing to pray for another week about the particular issue of injustice you chose last week.

Pray for someone you know and love that doesn't know Jesus personally, and needs to.

Close with this prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, who has made us alive when we were dead, canceled every debt, and disarmed our enemies: let me never cease to praise you for the glorious power of your cross, and to grow in love for you because of what you have done for me. You are so good to me, far beyond what I could ever deserve or earn, so help me to devote myself fully to you. I pray this in your name. Amen.

Monday

Week 3

Scripture

Leviticus 19:9-18

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

“You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.

“You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

The main point of this passage is laid out in the last verse: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This is the commandment that Jesus calls the second greatest. Read through the passage again, slowly. Think about each command as a fleshing out of the command to love your neighbor as yourself. How does this change your perspective?

Why do you think the Lord commands these things? What does it tell you about him, and what does it tell you about humanity?

Look through the passage again, and think through examples of each sin in the world around you. Ask the Holy Spirit for help in recognizing where you have transgressed; then confess and ask for the Lord’s forgiveness.

This is written for the people of God—us. Ask the Lord how the church of Christ can live out these commands more faithfully now in our age.

What is the Lord asking of you? If you have a clear thought, consider committing before the Lord to pursue it for a season. If you don’t have a clear answer, ask the Spirit to give you one.

Close with this prayer:

Eternal God, who became a neighbor to us in order to show us how to love: help me to love my neighbor as myself, and to faithfully live out your purposes for humanity in this world. Amen.

Tuesday

Week 3

Scripture

Amos 5:21-24

“I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

In this passage, the Lord calls out empty, hypocritical religiosity, and rejects it. Justice and righteousness had been lacking, and the people of God tried to brush it off underneath the veneer of their proper worship. If our worship is not complemented by faithful, ethical, godly living then it is a perversion which God hates.

This is a harsh word, but try not to flee from it or bypass it because it is hard. What do you find difficult about this, and why?

What might it look like in your life, and in our world, for justice to roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream? Where is this lacking right now?

Most likely, there are times and seasons in which every Christian has failed to some degree in this call to live out this abundant and consistent justice and righteousness that God demands. Ask the Spirit to search you and guide you in thinking through your own actions and ethics—what should you confess and repent of before the Lord?

Pray for greater justice and righteousness in the Church.

Pray for God’s justice and righteousness in the world.

Pray for yourself, and ask the Lord to make you a source and instrument of his justice and righteousness.

Close with this prayer:

Righteous Lord, who demands holiness and justice, and sees through every hypocritical façade: grant to me the vision and the courage to bring your justice and righteousness into the world more and more. Because you are the wellspring of life who dwells within me, let these rivers of living water flow out from me into this world. Not by might, nor by power, but only by your Spirit, O Lord. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday

Week 3

Scripture

Deuteronomy 10:12-21

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.

Moses here is exhorting the people of God to get their hearts right before God. This exhortation is in light of God's power and character: He is the Lord of heaven, the great, the mighty, the awesome God, etc. Everything that we are called to do flows out from God's power and character. If he is to be our Lord and our God, then we must submit to his ways, and seek to be as he is.

Ask the Spirit to lead you in reflecting on some aspect of the Lord's power and character. Take that aspect and praise God for it.

What aspect of this exhortation sticks out to you? What does the Lord require of you? Ask the Holy Spirit to lead your thoughts.

In ancient Israel, circumcision was a physical sign of the covenant promise, symbolizing that one belonged to him. But Israel often grew over-reliant on their physical circumcision, neglecting the true heart purpose of belonging to God. Are you ever over-reliant on the outward appearances of how you follow the Lord? In what ways might the Lord be asking you to circumcise your heart?

Close with this prayer:

Lord of Heaven and Earth, great and awesome God who is always just and true: as I come to know you and your greatness more and more, grant to me a spirit of praise, that I could not but worship you in thought, word, and deed. Let my life and actions in this world always flow out of my relationship with you, and my submission to you as my Lord. Circumcise my heart and prune away all that is not of you. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday

Week 3

Scripture

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

This passage looks to the changed status and ability of Christian believers as a basis for resolving disputes with right judgment. Among Christians, the unity we have in Christ is far more important than being right or winning an argument, and lawsuits in civil courts are a terrible witness to the world.

Can you recall a time when this word would have been a rebuke to your actions? Where you fought with other Christians and cared more about winning than your unity? Ask the Spirit to bring those times to mind, and reflect on them with the Lord.

In the second part of the passage, look at what distinguishes the righteous from the unrighteous (only the work of Christ). The difference between inheriting the Kingdom of God or not does not come about by what we do, but by what Christ has done. Give thanks to him for this gift of grace.

God's holiness demands holiness from us, and will not allow sin and wickedness in his presence. Reflect with the Lord on his holiness, and the cost required to wash, sanctify, and justify sinners to receive the Kingdom.

Pray for those in your life who, at the moment, do not seem as if they will inherit the Kingdom of God. What do they need from the Lord? What do they need from you?

Close with this prayer:

Holy Lord, whose holiness demands a cost that only you can pay: help me to submit to your ways, to love what you command, and to love my brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you for your washing and sanctifying and justifying work for me, so that I might inherit your Kingdom. In the name of Jesus: Amen.

Friday
Week 3

Scripture

Luke 10:25-37

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

We often miss in this parable how Jesus flips the lawyer's question. The man, desiring to justify himself, asks "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus, rather than telling him who he is required to love and who he can ignore, instead tells a parable encouraging the man (and us) to BE a neighbor. Read the passage again carefully and see if you can spot how Jesus does this.

Have you ever tried justifying yourself and your actions like the lawyer did? Have you ever been the religious type who walked by on the other side of the road?

Jesus' call to you is to be a neighbor to those around you, especially to those who are beaten down, cast out, oppressed or marginalized. Ask the Lord about this, and meditate on why he would ask that of you.

Pray for those individuals or communities that you know of that are poor or marginalized or oppressed. How might the Lord be asking you to be a neighbor today?

Give thanks for God's love, and this challenging call to us.

Close with this prayer:

Lord Jesus, who came in order to lift up those who were cast down and to mend our wounds: grant me that same heart for those whom you love yet the world has forgotten. Let me not seek to justify myself or protect myself as much as I seek to give of myself to love my neighbor. Help me to do this for your sake, and the world's sake. Amen.