

What God Wants-"Mishpat" (Justice)

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Lovely to have us all here together again, and hopefully we'll see everyone else soon who's watching us online. I think if you've got your Bibles, just keep them open to, well, open them, have them open at Jeremiah 22, our Old Testament reading.

And as you know, we're continuing our series from Jeremiah on what God wants, what God delights in. And we're going to look at an interesting word today.

Something interesting about that Old Testament reading. If I told you about a land where the rulers of that land built rich, palatial homes, decked with the finest fittings, taxing the people so much that they start stealing just to have food to eat, making the poor who are paying for the luxuries of the rich, where greed and corruption are all the leaders can see, and the poor and the innocent are nothing to them, and the only business practice they know are thuggish, mafia-style extortion.

Which land would you be thinking of? That was written a long time ago. Jeremiah, two and a half thousand years ago. 500 BC, plus minus 600 BC.

Isn't it interesting how it can describe multiple places on earth in multiple times? What do you think it would be like to live in such a country where that is happening constantly, and you've got no recourse to any justice, anything?

[1 : 3 7] The highest law in the land is against you. Your property is taken. You try and make your ends meet, and no one cares. You're on your own. You can't get anywhere.

You can't do anything. What a horrible place to be in. And that's why today's word from Jeremiah, or Jeremiah 9, I know you're in Jeremiah 22.

Stay there. But if you remember, we're basing our passage from Jeremiah 9, and it says this, Let him who boasts about this understand and knows me, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises faithful kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth.

For in these I delight, declares the Lord. Now, remember last week we looked at that first word, faithful kindness, faithful love. You remember the word we all had to say it? You got it still?

Yeah, chesed, excellent. So we got another Greek Hebrew word, and it's much easier today. Mishpat. Mishpat. Mishpat.

[2 : 4 1] You want to say that for me? Mishpat. Okay, we've got it. That's an easy one. That's fine. And Mishpat, justice, commonly translated as justice.

A couple of other translations you need to know about. But Mishpat is a major biblical theme, a major biblical concept. It's a word that occurs over 400 times in the Old Testament.

Okay? That's a lot of words, repetitive words in the Old Testament, which means it's very important. If God uses a word a lot, it means he wants us to know it's important to him.

Okay? He's not a God that just repeats himself for nothing, and he's repeated this word 400 times. And because we're made in his image, it's got to be important to us. Now, Mishpat has a lot of different translations, but the majority, the ones that are most common are justice, over 118 times, law or laws, 108 times, and judgment or judgments, 102 times, depending on the translation, but those are the modern translations, more or less.

Now, I think, so we're going to be thinking about justice today, and how the Bible uses it. And I think most people, when we think of the word justice, we have in mind laws, and lawyers, and law courts, and punishment.

[4 : 10] So that last of those three translations there, judgment, would probably be the one that first springs to mind if you hear the word justice, judgment. In fact, today, a Jewish lawyer, today, in modern terms, is called a Mishpatan.

So, a Jewish lawyer does Mishpat. He does law or justice. He's a Mishpatan. And the law courts in Israel are called Batei Mishpat Shalom.

Well, you won't know what Batei is, but Mishpat you've got, and Shalom, we all know. And so, they are courts for making peace between people, which is actually a really good way of thinking about what biblical justice is meant to do.

So, we often think of justice, it's just that one word, justice equals judgment equals punishment. But justice in the Bible is much more about than just punishing sin.

We've got to get our heads around this if we want to have a full, sort of a 3D view of what justice is in the Bible. For example, often in the Psalms, when a person is in trouble, they cry out for justice from God.

[5 : 22] It's not asking for punishment for them. It could well be asking for punishment for the people bothering them. But, they're really crying out for protection from some sort of evil, either from slander, or robbery, or some form of exploitation.

So, God's justice is called upon, in particular, to help those who are more prone to being the victims of oppression, abuse, or neglect in society.

Something our Jeremiah reading highlights for us. So, if you're in Jeremiah 22, just have a look at what God says there in verse 3. This is what the Lord says, Do what is just and right.

Rescue from the hand of the oppressor, the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

justice. So, but notice, so God is doing just, justice there. That's the word, just is the mishpat word, and doing what is right.

[6 : 26] That's a word we'll look at next week, and I'll let Nick surprise us next week, which one that is. But here, justice is more than just punishment or judgment for evil.

Justice is also about making sure that certain vulnerable categories of people are not taken advantage of. In other words, justice is also about protection from harm and provision for those who struggle to provide for themselves.

Justice is about protection from harm and provision for those who struggle to provide for themselves. We tend to call, in the modern world, we tend to call those actions mercy or charity. The Bible calls them justice.

Something that we need to click onto when we understand what we're supposed to be doing as Christians. Now, Tim Keller, a really good theologian and pastor in America, has written a book called Generous Justice, and he's got an interesting and helpful, I think a helpful definition of what justice is all about.

He says, mishpat, that's the justice word, is giving people what are they due, what they are due, what they are owed, almost, whether punishment or protection or care.

[7 : 44] So you see, there's almost three different definitions there, but they all sort of interrelate, don't they? Mishpat is about giving people what they are due, whether punishment, so that's one we often catch on to, and when you hear God saying, it's pretty often, I'm going to mishpat you if you don't be careful, which means, you know, you're going to be in trouble, but there's also protection.

Hey, I need some mishpat. Someone's hurting me, I need mishpat and care. Hey, I don't have stuff. I need mishpat. I need justice. Are you with me? So notice, it's not just about punishment, although that's a fair amount of that in the Bible, but it's about protection and care, protection for those, particularly who are vulnerable to abuse from those in power and they're sort of helpless to fight back, and care for those who are unable to independently provide for themselves.

Keller goes on to say, over and over again, mishpat describes taking up the care and the cause of widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor.

Those who have been called the quartet of the vulnerable. And so often through the Bible, you'll see this, sometimes a triplet and sometimes all four of them.

But very often, widows, orphans, sometimes called foreigners or aliens, not aliens from Mars, aliens, aliens, foreigners, in our terms, immigrants, and the poor.

[9 : 12] It's not up on the screen, but Keller goes on to say, the mishpat or justness of a society, according to the Bible, according to God, is evaluated by how it treats these groups.

Any neglect shown to the needs of the members of this quartet of vulnerability, the vulnerable, is not called merely lack of mercy or charity, but a violation of justice.

So that kind of ratchets it up a little bit, doesn't it? So it's not like, oh yeah, I haven't given anything to the poor guys this week. No, you're being unjust. Alright, so to get a full sort of understanding of why justice is so important to God, and why it's so important for His people to do, and in brackets why He gets so angry when they don't do it, we need to sort of get a bigger stand back from Jeremiah a bit, and get an overarching story of the Bible to get it in its context.

So, you might have heard us teach about creation, fall, redemption, and recreation often. Those are four big headings that summarize the whole entire story of the Bible. And so just remember how it all starts, and where it all starts.

God makes Adam and Eve in Eden to live in peace and fellowship with each other, and with Him. But they've got a job to do. They're not just there to enjoy His own presence for themselves.

[10 : 32] They're not there to fellowship and just wonder at His beauty in the Garden of Eden. They are to be His representatives, His image bearers, and they're to increase God's rule on earth by taking the goodness and the blessings and the life that they enjoy in Eden and sort of take it out those boundaries and make sure the whole of creation is enjoying those blessings.

But sin enters the picture very soon and spoils all that. Instead of goodness, there's evil. Instead of blessing, there's curse. Instead of life, there's death. By the time we get to Genesis 6, this thing that God has created, creation with people in it, is a total mess.

It's a total disaster. And life is a huge struggle to survive. People are killing each other and taking whatever they want and no one can stop them. God obviously judges them.

There's the flood. God, it starts again with Noah. It goes very badly along very quickly and so God starts again with one man.

You know who that is? We've done it in Genesis. Abraham. So the story of redemption starts with Abraham actually. But it starts with a new community.

[11 : 46] Abraham and his family. God saves him in order to get a job done. This is an important thing for us to realize, the connection between God wanting justice and what his people are meant to be doing.

Abraham and his family have a special role to play, a job. And justice is central to it. In fact, the first time we come across the word mishpat in the Bible, it's actually in reference to Abraham.

And it's foundational for helping us understand the relationship between God and justice and his people. So if you want, you can turn back to Genesis 18. Yeah, I don't think I've got this on the screen, but I might do.

I'm not sure I do. But maybe if you want to, in your Bibles, just turn with me to Genesis 18. That's just before God comes down and sorts out Sodom and Gomorrah.

And this is the first time we come across the word mishpat, justice. So it's kind of foundational. Just going to read from verse 17. The law says, God, there's Abraham.

[12 : 53] He says, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.

Do you remember those echoes from Genesis 12, right? For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.

Mishpat and Hebrew word you'll learn next week. So that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him. So just notice the reason that God has chosen Abraham. Yes, to be a blessing for Abraham, but not primarily to be a blessing for Abraham.

He's chosen Abraham to do a job so that Abraham and his family and children after him are going to take justice and righteousness to the world.

Can you see that? Is it on the screen? I do have it. Excellent. Okay. There's foundational reason as to why God has chosen Abraham.

[13 : 59] Abraham and his family are to restore order and goodness back into the world. They are now his instrument, God's instrument to undo the chaos and the brokenness of sin and bring rightness and justice back into the world.

Do you remember that central, so you remember the word we had last week, chesed. What was central to that understanding of chesed? What does God do with chesed? Chesed love?

You see my actions so I'm giving it away. Sort of, maybe not. We did this in a Bible. He binds himself. He places that love and says, yes, you and I are now in a binding relationship.

The biblical word for that is covenant. covenant. So covenant, God would create a people that would both receive and then reciprocate his faithful love to each other and to the world.

When it comes to justice, God is binding himself to his people so that they are the carriers of justice into the world. Does that make sense? Can you see that that's what God is talking about to Abraham here?

[15 : 02] That's why it's so important that God's people do these things. If they don't do it, who will? If they don't do it, the world is truly damned.

Abraham's family is literally the last chance the world has to get back to Eden and get rid of all the bad things in the world that make life so hard to cope with. I guess, think about the Olympics is on, right?

Is anyone watching the Olympics? Yeah. Did you watch the rugby? Yeah. The Olympics are on. And there's that famous opening ceremony, lighting the torch, right?

Now, how does the torch get there? Oh, it's got to go. They do it through the whole world, don't they? Run with a torch, run with a torch, and then someone gets the torch. Okay, great. Let's say that that torch, let's say someone gets the torch, and he says, oh, cool, I've got the torch.

Oh, I'm cold. You know, this torch is just for me. I'm just going to, you know what? I don't think you guys need this torch. I just want this torch for me, and I'm going to keep warm, and so there we go. And the torch doesn't go any further.

[16:05] It just stays with that person. After a while, it's going to die. In a sense, that's like justice. God's covenant and his justice is given to his people, not for them to enjoy, but obviously it's for us to enjoy, but for us to carry out into the rest of the world.

They've got a job. They're not meant to stand there with the torch. They're meant to carry the torch and go light little fires all over the place, little justice fires. Probably a bad analogy to talk about in South Africa at the moment, but...

Okay. When this is all Old Testament stuff, how does this apply to us as Christians? Well, by now you should know that because of our understanding of the covenant, we've been included into the covenant.

So now the baton has been passed to us. We are the carriers. We are the bringers. We are the makers. We are the doers of righteousness and justice.

Very often in the Bible, that's what justice is meant to be done. The verb that goes along with justice is do it. Do justice. Not think about it. Don't pray about it. Don't wonder about it.

[17:07] Just do it. God doesn't only save us for our sake, but He saves us. That's us here and the church in the world so that He is left with a people, with a nation, with a community, a church, us, in the world that will carry out His plan of bringing righteousness and justice into it.

So what I'm doing there is I'm just connecting justice with covenant and it's a, justice is a major strong word, covenant is a major strong word, so now I'm putting the two together and now you, like justice squared in my head.

It's like that, but okay. So covenant is one of the main drivers of why God's people must do justice in the world. It starts with Abraham through his people.

Obviously the Jews don't do a great job, so someone else has got to do it. Well, that's us. One way of thinking about us is we're the last hope the world has. I don't know if it puts more pressure on you or makes you feel special.

Kind of does a little bit of both to me. Now there's, so covenant is one of the main drivers as to why justice, Mishpat, is so important to God, why it's so important to people, because God is using people to do this justice thing on earth.

[18:18] God himself can do justice, but he's decided not to do that. He's decided to use people, which is how it is. There's another major driver that we need to look at and understand, which helps us shape how justice works, and that's redemption.

Obviously another major biblical concept. All right, so justice and redemption, what do they do have to do with each other? Well, in the Old Testament, the big act of redemption for the Jewish nation was the Exodus.

Exodus. And God uses that event to remind them of why they should be especially careful or caring for groups of people that were in the same situation that they were previously in.

I should have this up on the screen. Exodus 21 is just an example of many in the first five books of the Bible, throughout the Bible, but especially in the first five books, especially when God is laying down his laws as to how his new people must be, how they must act.

Exodus 21 says this, Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless, because if you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry.

[19 : 33] My anger will be aroused and I will kill you with the sword. Your wives will become widows and your children fatherless. So God is saying, listen, in a sense, if justice is when you cry out and you need justice, God has mishpotted his people.

They're in Egypt, they're slaves, and it's no fun being a slave, and they need help. And so they cry out to God and God says, okay, let me come do justice. Yes, it's also redemption.

But they've been mishpotted. God says, now I want you to do mishpotted, and if you don't, I'm going to mishpotted you. Am I confusing you? You understand what I'm saying? Yeah. What's interesting here is that God reminds his people to be just, to do justice, based on what he has done for them.

They were slaves, and they needed mishpat, they needed justice, they needed God to come and save him. In his chesed love, in his loving kindness, in his covenant, he did. And the reason is that because God has saved them out of slave-like conditions, and given them all this justice, they must now show the same justice to people who were in the same condition as them.

You know, it's like saving your kid from being beaten up by a bully, and then catching him doing exactly the same thing to his smaller brother. Just, you know, imagine seeing that. You're just saying, no, no, this is not what I've saved you for.

[20 : 56] I've saved you from that bully. I don't go and be a bully. Rather, go and save other people from being a bully, because you know what it feels like. Okay, now, again, what has this got to do with Christians? Well, isn't this exact same argument that's used in the New Testament for Christians to show grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness?

Yeah. If God, through Christ, has done these things for us, how can then we not do those things for others? Does that make sense? Just to summarize what we've found so far about justice, justice is a major theme in the Bible.

God's people are to practice justice because of two things, covenant and redemption. Both these events are not only for the benefit of God's people, but so that they become instruments of justice in the world to rid the world of sin and restore the blessings of Eden back into the world.

But there's a problem. Back in Jeremiah, as it was indeed for all the prophets, God's people are failing miserably. epically. They're not doing it.

They're not interested. In fact, they're doing the exact opposite of justice. Well, how does this change? How is God going to stop this from happening so that justice happens, so that his people obey him, so that they do what he wants?

[22 : 22] Well, that's where Jesus comes in. But before we get there, let's turn back to Jeremiah 22 and just see what's going on there for a little bit. So back in Jeremiah 22, I'm going to look from verse 13, this is where this, woe to the kings who are building their palaces like this.

Okay, from verse 13, woe to him who built his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his own people work for nothing, not paying them their labor. He says, I will build myself a great palace, spacious upper rooms, making large windows in it, panels with cedar, decorating it red.

Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Didn't your father have enough food? Didn't he have enough to drink?

He did what was right. And just now, over here, Jeremiah is talking to Shalom, who is the son of Josiah. So Josiah is one of the good kings.

And he's saying, look, your father did the right thing. He didn't store treasures for himself. And it still went well with him. He, the good king, defended the cause of the poor and the needy, and therefore it went well.

[23 : 45] Is that not what it means to know me? In other words, to defend the cause of the poor and the needy? But you, this horrible king, your eyes and your heart, only set on dishonest gain and shedding innocent blood and oppression and extortion.

That gets multiplied throughout the books. The prophets have got lots to say about how unjust God's people are. And God judges them for that.

He judges them for being ruthless and bloodthirsty and greedy. Yes, there's idolatry in there as well. It's all rolled into one big ugly package.

But it's important that God, that we know that God works in the world by judging people who are unjust towards other people. And it's not just the Jews that he judges. Just in the book of Jeremiah, he goes for Babylon, Edom, and one other which I've already forgotten.

But God goes after all the nations that do injustice. God says, I've finally had enough. Jeremiah, he's actually really had enough with Jeremiah.

[24 : 56] Not with Jeremiah the prophet, by the time of Jeremiah. Jeremiah gets taken into captivity. That's when it all goes south. The last king, do you know what happens to him? Nebuchadnezzar catches him.

They take him out to the hillside somewhere outside Jerusalem, a couple of, actually many miles away. They take his sons, they cut their throats in front of him, and they poke his eyes out.

So the last thing he sees is the death of his own sons. And then they take him to captivity. And he's a slave. Because he did this kind of thing, building palatial homes and trotting over the people of the poor.

Clearly, the Jews were not capable, God's people were not capable of carrying out his plans for justice in the world. God's solution? Well, remember his covenant with Israel.

He's chesedded with them. He's covenanted with them. He's placed his love on them. He can't get rid of them. The only solution then is to bring forth a king who will deliver the justice that God wants and will create a people fit for purpose.

[26 : 12] And in fact, that's exactly what we find in Jeremiah. And in fact, all the Old Testament prophets, they all point to the problem of God's people, they point to their sins, they say, you can't change, so God says, I'm going to do something to change it.

And it always revolves around this son of David, a servant, an anointed one, the branch of David is sometimes called. So, Jeremiah 22, it's over Cedovers.

Jeremiah 23, here's what I'm going to do about it. So, if you've got your Bibles, just flip over to Jeremiah 23, and this is where God starts to say, okay, this is going to be my solution to this problem, where my people are not doing justice in the world.

Jeremiah 23 from verse 5. And he's still angry with the shepherds, the shepherds are the leaders of the people. He says this from verse 5, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous branch, a king, who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

There's that mishpat word. In his days, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called, the Lord our righteousness, or the Lord our Savior.

[27 : 38] Notice the job description of the coming Messiah. He will do what is just and right. in the land. He will be the one who will bring about justice to the world.

He will live a righteous life, not like the kings of the Old Testament. And by living a righteous life, he will save his people. This, in fact, is the hope of what the whole Old Testament points towards, what our Psalm 72, which we read earlier.

And this is exactly what Jesus does in the New Testament, is it not? Remember our reading from Matthew chapter 12? You can turn there if you like. I'm not sure if I've got that on the screen.

I may not have. In Matthew 12, you see what he's doing. He's saving someone on the Sabbath day. Oh, you can't do that.

Well, why not? Why can't I do good on the Sabbath day? You guys would do it. You know you would do it, so stop picking on me. But let me tell you what God wants from this king that he's sent.

[28 : 41] Let me tell you who you're missing out on. Matthew 12 from verse 18. Here's my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love in whom I delight.

I will put my spirit on him. I will proclaim justice to the nations. He will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out. No one will hear his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed he will not break. A smoldering wick he will not snuff out. He has brought justice through to victory in his name. The nations will put their hope.

And so Jesus is the answer to the problem of injustice in the world. Indeed, he's the only answer. And he's the one that takes all the failures of the Old Testament people of God and somehow turns them into victory.

Okay, well we know how. He does this through his life, through his righteous life, through his obedient life, through his sacrificial death, through being raised again from the dead to life, and then exalted to God's right hand as the Messiah, and then pouring out the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 47] All those things work together to tell you that Jesus does this thing, it's what Matthew 12 is talking about. It's those events that has made a new people of God who are now finally capable of bringing justice to the nations, to the world.

I guess which brings us to our final point, which is, well where do we fit in? We've looked at justice in the Old Testament, we've seen how justice fits with the covenant, and how that also applies to us, because we're in the covenant, we've seen how justice is sort of given urgency and drive from redemption, which also applies to us, we've been saved, but what about, we've seen how justice and Jesus fit together, what about us, justice and us?

Well, God delights in those who delight in doing justice. I don't know if you've noticed, but there's the little delight word in there, it's in Jeremiah, that Jeremiah 9 passage, and here it is again.

Here's my servant whom I've chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight. God delights in Jesus, because he has brought justice to the world, but he does so through us, which means we live up to our calling of doing justice, when we live up to our calling of doing justice, we are a delight to God.

Isn't that a nice way of thinking about doing good things? Indeed, we are now God's instruments to bring about the blessing of Eden. Actually, to be honest, the blessing of Eden is looking back.

[31 : 27] God has got something more, better than Eden. We are bringing the blessings of the new creation into the world, because we've got the power of the risen Christ and his Holy Spirit working in us, being a delight to God.

We got some feedback from the food that we sent off to KZN. I'm not sure who gave food. We had about two tables fulls, table fulls, and I bought some stuff and sent it off.

I was just like, it made me so happy to get feedback. I was like, that's cool, I did that. That's so awesome. It just makes you feel good. And then to know that that makes God feel good, and then God feels good about you, makes you feel even better.

I actually feel like sending more packets now. I can't wait for the next time we need to send packets. All right, well, so you're with me that we are God's instrument for justice.

Have you seen how that all works together? God hasn't chosen us for us, he's chosen us to do a job to bring justice into the world, to do the right thing, which includes, remember, not just punishment as in telling people where they're wrong, but in providing protection for vulnerable people and care for those who need it.

[32 : 47] So what does that look like for us at St. Mark's? How are we to do justice? Well, I guess some of that looks like what it did for the Old Testament.

That quartet of the vulnerable hasn't disappeared. In fact, the New Testament says that's the best place to start when doing justice. The concern for those in need carries over from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

James chapter 1. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

There's many passages in the New Testament talking about helping widows, helping the poor, and helping the foreigner. They're all there in the New Testament, and they're all with us today.

Doing justice means caring for and protecting them. Justice is a working word. It's a doing word. Something must be done. It's not a concept. It's not a thought.

[33 : 48] It's an action. It's a concept as well, but God doesn't want us to think about justice. He wants his people to do justice. Some suggestions for us to think through. You can join one of our mercy ministry teams.

Maybe we should start calling them justice teams. We've got the Good Samaritan Project that operates on Sunday. We feed the homeless and the hungry, and we minister to them. Three of us are going to go do that just now.

At the moment, we give out, and we've got helping hands, which also helps people in the church. We give out parcels, but there is opportunity to expand those ministries.

In fact, at some point, we'll start talking with you about helping hands and supporting helping hands. Maybe you don't feel like doing that, but I would suggest that think about getting involved, even if it's not handing out food or making food or talking to the guys.

There are other plans I've got with those ministries. Just say, yeah, actually, I think I'd like to do some kind of justice. I'm not sure what. That's fine. I've got your name. When I start thinking of the various things we start doing, we can be in touch.

[34 : 57] We also do community outreaches. You remember those community outreaches we did last year, the railway cleanup and the various cleanups? We'll still do a few of those every now and then. In fact, we've connected with other community groups that are asking us, hey, when are you going to do that again?

They actually want to join us and do some cleanups. We've sent out emergency relief and I'm sure we'll be doing that again. And more recently we started engaging with the government. Remember, we sent those petitions off.

And by the way, that's not going to stop for any time soon unless things change. Now, if you're not any of those things, that's okay. Just think through what area of your life that you come into contact with daily where you can be a delight to God.

Start with your family. I don't know, maybe you did some unjust things that were unfair or uncaring. Okay. Kids can think through that. Parents can also think through that. Say, okay, I'm sorry.

Let me see if we can fix that. Go and make restitution. Apologize and say, hey, I don't want to do that again. I'm going to do it this way. Think through your work. Maybe as a boss you need to be more caring. Maybe you need to put better boundaries in place.

[36 : 04] Think through your community. Think through South Africa. And then come up with areas of justice or protection or care that you can pray about or get involved in in each of those areas.

And so I think that's a good way of thinking about justice. Think about areas of justice, protection, and care.

So you'll hear us often pray about justice. I often pray about justice for our country. We need it. It's full of corruption. So we do need justice, but people need protection and people need care as well. And all of those things are doing justice.

In closing, yes, the problems in South Africa are huge. So what? We've got a God that is much bigger. Yes, sin is real. It's a real problem.

So what? We've got a king that has conquered sin. Doing justice is hard. But so what? We've got the power of the Holy Spirit. And we have the righteous Savior, the Messiah.

[37 : 01] Jesus is our Lord on our side. And he has promised to lead justice to victory. And that should make working for justice in our world a privilege and a delight.

Let's pray. Dear Lord Jesus, we have been called and we've been saved by you. You've made us your own, but you've given us a job to do.

We are the torch carriers, the bearers of something that delights you and delights God, justice. Making sure that people are cared for, making sure that people are protected, and making sure that justice is done when it needs to be done.

Lord God, give us your Holy Spirit so that we can be true light, true torch carriers of justice, peace, and reconciliation in our world.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.