

What God Wants-"Righteousness"

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- [0 : 0 0] Lord, we do thank you so much for your word that gives us light in the darkness and truth amongst all the lies.
- And we thank you that we can gather once again around your word. We can be here wherever we are, even watching remotely online, gathering at St. Mark's, and that you will be present with us, that you come and you are present with us by your spirit to speak to us as we open our hearts to receive your word.
- Speak to us and change us now in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I want to start this morning by reading to you a verse that really shocked me when I read it and considered what it was saying.
- The verse is Deuteronomy 28, 63, and it's God talking to the people of Israel through Moses after renewing his law with them and reminding them to keep it.
- And he says these words, Deuteronomy 28, 63, just as the Lord was glad to cause you to prosper and to multiply you, so he will also be glad to cause you to perish and to destroy you.
- [1 : 1 9] And what shocked me about that is the word glad. That God would be glad to cause the Israelites to perish and to destroy them.
- Now, we need to understand the reason why God can be glad to destroy people. Not reluctantly, but glad. That word doesn't mean, you know, reluctantly because he has to. It means he wants to. And we need to understand why that is. And it's not because he's vindictive or he enjoys killing people. The reason is because he is righteous.
- Righteous. And that is the word we're looking at this morning, the third in our series, looking at what God wants. This word righteousness. And I hope you see that it's not just a light word.
- It's a heavy word when we understand it and what it means and what implications it has for our world and our lives. And it's, of course, the word that God says in Jeremiah 9, 24, which is the passage that we've been studying.
- [2 : 3 3] I'll read it again. But the one who boasts should boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord showing faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth.
- Do you remember the two words we've already covered? Faithful love, chesed, justice, mishpat. Well, now is the third Hebrew word that you're going to learn in this series, righteousness.
- And that word is the Hebrew word tzedakah. Tzedakah. Can you say that? Say it at home or say it in church? Tzedakah. Okay. Well, that's the Hebrew word translated righteousness.
- And that word, basically, the basic meaning of it means doing the right thing at its root. That's what it means. Righteousness doing the right thing, but doing the right thing in all situations.

So it means thinking the right thing, saying the right thing, reacting the right way to what happens to you. Acting, doing, choosing the right choices.

[3 : 42] The good thing. The just thing in all situations. That's what righteousness really means. But not just the right thing according to our standard of right and wrong, but according to the standards of our Creator, who, because He made us alone, gets to define what is right and wrong.

And so, at its heart, the word righteousness in the Bible actually means whatever conforms to God's will. What God says is right. Doing that.

Thinking it. Living it consistently. That is righteousness. Whatever conforms to God's will. And, of course, that means that God is always, by definition, righteous.

The Bible affirms that. God is righteous. But what it means is that He is always conforming to His own will. He is always consistent with what He wants in what He says and what He thinks and what He allows to happen and what He does.

What God, who made the universe, wants is always the right thing. That's what it means that God is righteous. That what God wants is always the right thing for this universe, even if it's not what we want.

[4 : 54] And that's often the case. What the right thing is, what God wants for His will and for His universe, is not necessarily the thing that we want. And we need to understand this.

Because we think, naturally, that we are the center of the universe, right? And so we think that whatever is not good for us, whatever prevents our happiness, can't possibly be the right thing.

That's what the world will say. You know, you've got to let me be happy. That is the right thing. That is my, what is the word they use? Right. To be happy and to have everything work out well for me.

Whatever is good for us must be the right thing. Whatever is bad for us or makes us uncomfortable or doesn't make us happy must be the wrong thing. That's our standards of right and wrong. But that's not God's standards of right and wrong.

Because the things that are not good for us or the things that prevent our happiness, they can be the right thing. Because we're not the center of the universe.

[5 : 56] And what is right is not defined by our will or our happiness or our comfort. But it's defined by God's will. And those are very often two different things.

God's will and our will. And we need to understand that right and wrong and righteousness is not defined by our will but God's will. In fact, that's the lesson Job needed to learn.

Remember the book of Job and the terrible situation that God allowed Job to go through. And throughout the book, this word tzedakah actually appears a lot in the book of Job.

Because Job is really doubting God's righteousness. Because he's going through things that he doesn't want to happen. And things that he thinks are unjust to happen to him.

And so he continues to doubt whether God is actually being righteous. And so he has to go through that. And it turns out that God is doing the right thing in bringing Job through all that.

[6 : 55] So that he can learn a very valuable lesson. And so he's going through this. We read it at the end of Job. The book of Job. Job 37.23.

Job says these words. As he's considered this. As he's gone through these trials. He says, He is exalted in power.

And he will not violate justice and abundant righteousness. Mishpat and tzedakah. He will not violate. That's the lesson that Job needed to learn.

That God will never violate righteousness. Even when it looks like what he is doing or allowing to happen is not right. He will never violate righteousness.

In other words, he will never do anything that is not the right thing. That is what it means for God to be righteous. He will never do anything that is not the right thing.

[7 : 56] Even if we don't know how it's the right thing. And that fact should be a great comfort. But only to those who really want the right thing for this universe and for the world.

As Jesus puts it in Matthew 5 verse 6. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. It should be a great comfort to those people that the God who is in control of this universe never does what is wrong.

And he never makes a mistake. He always does the right thing. Even when it doesn't feel like it to us. And that should deeply actually give us great comfort.

Because like Job said, who can reach him? Who can truly understand God's mind and why he allows what he allows? But one thing we do know is that he is always doing the right thing.

God is righteous. But more than that, the Bible tells us that God wants righteousness. He desires it. He delights in it. Look again at Jeremiah 9 verse 24.

[9 : 05] I'll read it again. Such an important verse. I can never read it too much. The one who boasts should boast in this that he understands and knows me that I am the Lord. Showing faithful love, chesed, justice, mishpat, and righteousness, tzedakah, on the earth.

For this is important. For I delight in these things. This is the Lord's declaration. God delights in righteousness. He delights in the right thing.

God deeply takes pleasure in doing the right thing. And the right things being done in his creation. And so he wants his world to be filled with people who also delight in and do the right thing.

He wants his creation to be filled with people who conform to their creator's will. But not reluctantly. Not under duress. But joyfully and willingly.

That's why he gave us a choice not to conform to his will. Not to choose to be righteous. And we chose not to. We chose to conform to our own will instead.

[10 : 15] Each of us naturally choose to conform to our own will rather than God's will. Which makes us unrighteous. God does not force us to be righteous. But his plan is for this world to be filled only with those who are righteous.

So that his creation can be what he's always intended for it to be. And it's when that happens that this world and its societies will finally all work properly.

But before that can happen. Before that can be a possibility for this world. God must destroy all that is not righteous.

All that is not willing to conform to his will. And the Bible assures us of that uncomfortable truth over and over again. Listen to Psalm 37 verse 38.

But transgressors will all be eliminated. The future of the wicked will be destroyed. And that itself is the right thing for God to do.

[11 : 21] That is the thing that is consistent with righteousness. In fact, he can't not destroy the unrighteous. Did you know that there are certain things God can't do?

You know that? There are certain things God cannot do. The Bible tells us. He cannot lie. He cannot sin. He cannot deny himself.

2 Timothy 2.13 It says God cannot. There is something that God cannot do. He cannot deny himself. He cannot go against his own nature and character.

And therefore he cannot not punish the unrighteous. Because he is inherently righteous himself. He will not violate righteousness, Job says.

And so do you see the problem here? Not the obvious problem. The obvious problem is no one is righteous.

[12 : 22] We know that. Our consciences tell us that. And the Bible tells us that. Romans 3.10 No one is righteous. Not even one. And therefore God must destroy us. But that's not actually the problem.

Because God doesn't actually have a problem with that. That's right. That's the right thing to do. There's another problem. The problem. You know what the problem is? The problem is chesed.

Think about it. Remember what we learned two weeks ago. The word chesed is God setting his love on those who don't deserve it. God's commitment to love and bless his covenant people and to save them.

That's the problem. If God is also righteous. How can God do the chesed that he's committed to do and still be righteous which he inherently is?

That is the dilemma throughout the Old Testament. And the solution to that is a theological concept that we need to know.

[13 : 25] That we all need to understand. It's a concept called imputed righteousness. Remember that phrase. Imputed righteousness. Because that is the only way this dilemma can be solved.

This idea of imputed righteousness is actually hinted at in the prophets. And we already see the seed of it in the Old Testament.

So in Isaiah 45 verse 25. God is talking through Isaiah to sinful Israel.

But he says this to them. He makes a promise. He says all the descendants of Israel will be justified. And find glory through the Lord.

That word justified literally means to be made righteous. To be declared righteous. There is a way God is hinting at through the prophets.

[14 : 23] There is a way for the unrighteous to be made righteous. With a righteousness that is not their own. It doesn't come from within them. But now we think about that.

God promising that he's going to make unrighteous people righteous. That he's going to declare them righteous. That they've done nothing wrong. Even though we know they have. It doesn't sound right. It sounds wrong.

It would be wrong if that happened. And you know in our situation in life. Imagine you're walking down the street. And someone came and knocked you over the head. And robbed you.

And took your wallet and everything. And then kicked you. And then ran away. And then you call the police. And then the police chase him. And they catch him. And they take him to court. And you're there. And the judge says.

You know this person who did this to you. I know it wasn't very nice for you. But he's my friend. And so I'm going to say that he did nothing wrong. I'm going to declare him righteous.

[15 : 20] I'm going to justify him. Because I'm the judge. I can do that. That wouldn't be right. Would it? It wouldn't be right for a human judge to do that. Let alone God. And God actually says that in his word.

Listen to Proverbs 17 verse 15. Proverbs 17 verse 15 says. Justifying the guilty.

And condemning the just. Both are detestable to the Lord. Justifying the guilty. Saying that an unrighteous person is righteous.

Is detestable to the Lord. So how can God promise to do it to Israel? When they know they're unrighteous. And yet God promises he will justify them. How can God do it?

When such a thing is actually detestable to him. And that's where we need to understand this idea of imputed righteousness. Which is not just pretending someone is righteous when they're not.

[16:18] It's not saying oh that person is righteous pretending it. When actually they're unrighteous. They've broken the law. And they're guilty before the law. But saying well they're not. That's what is detestable to God.

But that's not what imputed righteousness is. Imputed righteousness is actually legally making someone right before God's law. And that is the whole point of Jesus shedding his blood and dying on the cross.

That's why it needed to happen. And that's what Paul explains to us. The apostle in 2 Corinthians. Listen to these words. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21.

He sums up as he's considered. And as God has revealed to Paul the hidden nature of what happened on the cross. When Jesus died for his people. Paul sums it up in one verse.

Jesus. Like this. 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21. God made the one who did not know sin. To become sin or to be sin for us.

[17:24] So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Jesus was made sin.

He became sin when he voluntarily took on the curse of God's law for human sin. So that.

Now understand this. Because he voluntarily took on the curse of God's law. Knowing exactly what he was doing. God punishing him.

Would be righteous. It would be the right thing to do. That's the result of Jesus taking on the curse of sin. And hanging on a cross. God punishing him.

Became the right thing to do. He really became sin for us. He really became guilty for his people. So that God punishing him would be righteous.

[18:23] And not contradict his righteousness. But. The verse goes on and tells us that. In the mysterious working of how God set things up.

The same. At the same time. That Jesus. Became sin. And it was right for God to judge him. In the same time that he was made sin.

Those. Who are in him through faith. From every age. At that moment. Were also. Made. Really righteous. In God's sight. Before. God's law.

So that. It would be the right thing for God. Not. To punish them. Now. We don't know exactly how. Or the mechanics of how that is.

Possible. But we do know. That. It did. Work that way. Because God. Tells us. That's why. Jesus. Took on sins. To make.

[19:18] Punishing him. The right thing. For God to do. So that saving his covenant people. Which he's committed to doing. Would also be. The right thing for God to do. And having mercy on them. And loving them.

And pardoning their sins. So that it wouldn't betray his. Righteousness. God set it up. He made it so that he can show. Chesed. To unrighteous people.

Unconditional. Merciful love. To unrighteous people. And not be unrighteous himself. By doing it. That's why. The cross happened. That's why.

The gospel was set up the way it was. And even though we don't understand. How that is possible. God assures us. That that's what Jesus achieved for us. Listen to Romans 3.

Verse 26. God presented Jesus. To demonstrate his righteousness.

[20 : 14] At the present time. So that he would be righteous. And declare righteous. The one who has faith in Jesus.

God can do both. Because of the gospel. And only because of the gospel. God can. Impute righteousness to his people. As well as remain righteous himself.

And make not punishing them. The right thing to do. In fact. The opposite is true as well. God made it so that punishing us. Would be the wrong thing.

It would contradict his righteousness. That is how effective. The cross of Jesus was. God made it so that punishing us. Would be unrighteous. For him to do.

In the gospel. God set it up. So that punishing those who have submitted to his son. Would be unrighteous. Would be inconsistent for this character.

[21 : 06] So that he can love us. Like he decided before the creation of the world to do. And so that you. If you are one of those people. Can have a rock solid confidence in your status before God.

That your sins have been taken away. That you have been made righteous in God's sight. And that you don't have to doubt that. Because Jesus has achieved it on the cross.

And. So that not only can you have the confidence. In your status before God. As righteous. But that you can actually begin living. As the righteous person that he saved you to be.

And that's the last thing I want us to consider this morning. That God's people have been made righteous. In order to really become righteous.

Remember. God's end game. God's desire for this world. Is to be filled with people. Who are actually righteous. Not just said to be righteous when they're not. But actually righteous.

[22 : 08] And so. The reason he makes his people righteous in Christ. The reason that he imputes righteousness into them. Is not for us to carry on being unrighteous. In fact.

If you use the idea of imputed righteousness. As an excuse to keep chasing after what you want. You don't have it. Let me say that again. It's so important. If you use the idea of imputed righteousness.

As an excuse to keep chasing after what you want. You don't have righteousness. Imputed at all. Because proof of imputed righteousness. Is God's Holy Spirit.

As a seal that he puts in his people. And his Holy Spirit will make you want what he wants. It will make you want righteousness.

It will make you as Jesus says. Hunger and thirst. To do what conforms to God's will in all situations. And it's those people who do have God's Spirit.

[23 : 04] Who have been imputed God's righteousness. And declared righteous. And justified. It's those people who will hunger and thirst. For what conforms to God's will.

And Jesus promises. In Matthew 5 verse 6. That they will be filled. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Because they will be filled. In other words they will actually get what they're hungering and thirsting for. The real thing. They will become righteous. It won't happen overnight. But it will happen. They will become righteous.

And they will be eventually fit. To live in a restored creation. Listen to 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21 again.

Such an important verse. He made the one who did not know sin. To be sin for us. So that in him. We might become the righteousness of God.

- [24 : 01] Notice. Not just have the righteousness of God. Jesus died and took on us. And so that we will become the righteousness of God. You see.
- As it means. As God's Spirit trains us. Slowly but surely. To conform more and more to his will. Through his means of grace. Through his word. Through the church.
- And through his Spirit. As he trains us to conform to his will. We will actually become his righteousness on earth. We will become the beginning of his restored creation.
- The first fruits of it. We will become. Through God's Spirit working in us. A signpost. To the world around us.
- To point. To the restored creation. That God has always intended. And to draw people. Into God's covenant. So that they can be part of that too.
- [25 : 00] A restored creation. A fixed world. That is coming. That God has planned. A world filled with. Chesed. Committed. Unconditional love.
- With mishpat. Where all wrongs will be made right. And tzedakah. True righteousness. Because that.
- Is what God wants. Let's pray. Lord. Lord. We. Thank you. For this time. We could spend. In the last four weeks. In. Just. Considering. These words. Of your prophet. Jeremiah. That you sent. To give us. These truths. That you desire. Faithful love.
- And. Justice. And righteousness. And we thank you. That through Jesus. You have allowed us. Not only to. Learn to desire.
- [25 : 57] The same things as you. But to actually start. Incorporating them. Into our lives. And living them out. We pray. Lord. That you would help us. To do that. Help us. To consider. What we've learned. In these verses.
- And help us. To. More and more. Live out. Chesed. Faithful love. And mishpat. Justice. Making right.
- The wrongs. In the world around us. And tzedakah. Righteousness. Conforming. What we do. And say. And think. To your will. We look forward.
- To when the world. Will be fixed again. We thank you. That through Jesus. We can be part of that. And we pray. That you would help us. As we practice. And live out. These things in our lives. That you would help us.
- To become a signpost. To that restored creation. To those around us. So that they can come to Christ. And be saved too. Use us at St. Mark's. To glorify your name.
- [26 : 52] In this way. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Sou från medina gan minutes.
- Your■■■■. I was the one who never knew.
- I was really Meetspärkt from my stomach. I was the one who... I was gently asked.