



Gardena Valley Baptist Church
Helping People Discover Jesus and Become His Fully Devoted Followers

June 3, 2020

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5.18

Dear GVBC Family,

There was never a good time for the tumultuous events of the past few days marked by the tragic death of George Floyd and the subsequent protests and violence, but coming on the heels of three months of lockdown was particularly difficult. How do we followers of Jesus respond to racism, prejudice, and social injustice? The Judeo-Christian tradition witnesses to a God that cries out, demanding that justice "roll down like waters, righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Christians agree that being advocates for justice is critical to the Christian testimony. And yet, one need not look widely to see that Christians disagree about what social justice involves.

What does justice have to do with healthcare reform, illegal immigration, and same-sex marriage? Should Christians support tax policies that effectively require wealthy individuals to fund programs that benefit the poor? Does justice require that we acknowledge and address the inequalities borne out of years of gender and ethnic exclusivity? Is the Christian vision of social justice distinct from non-Christian visions? Christians disagree over the proper answer to these questions. In short, Christians agree that justice is important but disagree about what a commitment to justice means.

So often discussions about faith and social justice seem theoretical, far removed from the real world of protests and riots. But this is not the case today. The viral video of George Floyd pinned to the pavement by a Minnesota police officer came far too soon after the recording of Ahmaud Arbery being shot while jogging in Georgia and the video of a woman calling 911 on a black man watching birds in New York's Central Park.

For some Christians "social justice" is questionable culture currency used by the PC cultural to advocate yet another seemingly anti-Biblical stance. Yet, Christians can be in danger of being "tone deaf" and so removed from events in the real world that our voice is dismissed from this important conversation. Proverbs 28.5 says, "Evildoers do not understand what is right, but those who seek the LORD understand it fully." So, if Christians do understand what is right and we say and do nothing about the sin and evil around us we ourselves are sinning. As James 4.17 says "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them." We don't want that to describe us, so what will we do?



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The truth of Scripture is that we have some understanding of justice because we're tethered by faith to the one who *is* justice, because we seek the one who defines and loves justice, the one who calls us to justice. Isaiah 30.18 says justice belongs to God and so when we seek and find God, we seek and find justice. By seeking Christ, our perspective of justice changes from our own personal perspectives to God's perspective. And a God-centered understanding of justice is tied to three things: First, we understand what sin is — we understand what *our* sin is. Justice begins in repentance because we can't ask God to uphold just the *part* of his justice on earth that is our preference. Secondly, we understand something about justice because we know the one who satisfied God's justice against sin, completely. We look at the cross of Jesus and see the clearest display of God's justice on sin. Social justice is not the gospel, but Scripture makes it clear there is no good news without social justice.

How might we be God's agents of reconciliation during this difficult time? Perhaps we should begin with a hard look at ourselves. Here are some questions:

1. What ways have you contributed toward a gospel void of social justice?
2. What ways have you sought to bring social justice outside of God's hands?
3. What prejudices and racist attitudes exist within you? What is the source of it? And how might you repent before Jesus today?

Finally, can we all be praying for the neighbor that is ethnically different from you and seek to be a blessing to your block/neighbors in tangible ways.

Becoming an agent of reconciliation,
Pastor Doug (on behalf of the Board and Staff of GVBC)