

“True Injustice, Part 1” Matthew 26:57-66, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
September 13, 2020
Morning Worship Service

“And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.⁵⁸ But Peter also was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death;⁶⁰ and they did not find *any*, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward,⁶¹ and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’”⁶² And the high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;⁶⁶ what do you think?” They answered and said, “He is deserving of death!” (Matt. 26:57-66 NAS)

Introduction

There is a lot of talk today about justice and injustice

- We are even being swamped with discussions about social justice
- We are being told that the world today is filled with systemic racism. That people are walking around in fear. That the oppressors are using a system to keep others in check so they can keep their power and take advantage of the oppressed
- We are told that

“The result is that the belief that society is structured of specific but largely invisible identity-based systems of power and privilege that construct knowledge via ways of talking about things is now considered by social justice scholars and activists [and everyone else] to be an objectively true statement about the organizing principle of society. ... Therefore, in Social Justice scholarship, we continually read that patriarchy, white supremacy, imperialism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, ableism, and fatphobia are literally structuring society and infecting everything. They exist in a state of immanence—present always and everywhere.” And if they are present always and everywhere, if they are so deeply embedded within our knowledge of the world, we must always scrutinize not only our personal interactions, but also “texts, events, culture, activities, places, spaces, attitudes, mind-sets, phrasing, dress, and every other conceivable cultural artifact for *hidden bigotry*, then expose it and purge it and its sources from society—or at least access to the means of cultural production.” Which, of course, is exactly what we see all around us today, mostly notably in “cancel culture.” Challies review of Cynical Theories

- We are being conditioned to believe that because one person does not have what another does then an injustice has taken place. Or if one behavior is not accepted as normal then an injustice has taken place. If one comes from a minority group then they are being oppressed

and they simply need to identify and call out the various expressions of white privilege and power around them

- If I or someone else should simply speak up and confront the ideology the response back is that my words are a microaggression to keep power
- They say, “My words are naturally filled with hate and racism and bigotry.” Even if I say nothing objectively wrong. Or even if I declare basic truths affirmed in the scriptures and or held as the basis of the founding of this nation, ie man is created in the image of God and given the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Truths men and women and given up fortunes and their lives for. Since these truths are considered part of the structure that has put me in power therefore they are attacks on them and they have a right to attack me back. Even physically if I do not turn away from these ideas. Since I use rhetoric and teach ideas which allow me to keep power then it is inherently evil and unjust. Basically to believe what the scriptures have taught and what our nation was founded on is called injustice because we are keeping some group in oppression. Or because these ideologies were around when certain groups were oppressed or mistreated

The great injustice is to be in power over an oppressed group. The great injustice is to have while someone else does not have. The great injustice is that a minority or oppressed group has suffered so the remedy is for another group, the group in power, to pay

With the New Justice we are no longer judged as individuals based on our own character and conduct. We are judged as a group based on where we identify

- And you do not get to pick your identity
- If you are white, you just need to repent of your whiteness and make restitution for the abuses of your parents and grandparents

This is the modern landscape of justice and injustice

It comes with its own language. It comes with its own terms and message. Because I have identified in other sermons that this is a gospel. It comes with its own good news. If you embrace its message and are converted to it you are not “born again” but rather “woke.” The new Church is not seeking to be “born again” it is seeking to be “woke”

- They want you “Woke” to the microaggressions around you
- They want you “Woke” to the suffering of oppressed groups
- They want you “Woke” to the systemic racism
- They want you “Woke” to the injustice

As one author stated it, the Church today has faced the “Great Awakening”

A Leading preacher in this work is Eric Mason who recently wrote the book “Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice”

With all of this talk about injustice it is fitting we take a look at real injustice. The events leading to our Lord’s death illustrates true injustice. The murder of Jesus Christ was the greatest act of injustice performed by local government and religious leaders. When God’s institutions abandon their design there is no end to the heinous corruption

- Jesus was an innocent man, who suffered wrongly

- Jesus was betrayed
- Jesus was falsely accused
- Jesus was unjustly condemned

What we see in the trial of Christ is true injustice. If we do not learn to spot real injustice, we are going to be swept up in the hysteria around us

- Mark it, we are not seeing the pursuit of justice around us today
- The NFL is not bowing for justice
- The NBA is not bowing and protesting for justice
- The MLB is not bowing for justice
- The hypocrisy which has spread to our youth games is not for justice
- What we see around us doctrines of demons filling people with rage

True Justice is identifiable. True justice is clearly known:

Justice is patient. Justice seeks the truth. Justice establishes the facts. True justice is vindicated by the facts. True justice is not found in stories it is vindicated in the details. True Justice demonstrates power with proper restraint. True justice condemns the wicked and exonerates the righteous. True justice holds each individual to a standard. True justice is equalitarian. Everyone, no matter their race, color, gender, nationality are judged the same. True justice is impartial. True justice is eternal and timeless. True justice will not be thwarted

- Because true justice is anchored in God
- For God is Just and true
- Rom 3:25-26

whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:25-26 NAS)

- God who sees all things and knows all things will bring all people to account for the deeds done in the body 2 Cor 5

What we are seeing today is hate dressed up in moral garments

- Hate posturing as justice
- Hate posturing as moral uprightness
- The irony is that the very group which is promising Justice is acting unjustly

Make no mistake:

- The 100+ days of protesting in Portland, Oregon is unjust
- The burned down neighborhoods in Minnesota are grand demonstrations of injustice.
- The angry mobs in Baltimore yelling at restaurant patrons is not justice
- The news stories are filled with examples of the new justice being forced upon us. The new justice is nothing more than injustice fueled by hate dressed in virtue preying on those who have been mistreated or are in the minority

The problem is that power hungry and greedy people are exploiting the vulnerabilities of true victims to usher in their new justice system. *A system of justice which abandons God. It abandons truth. It abandons righteousness. It abandons true justice to seek the justice of the whole rather than the individual*

- The problem will be that the victim will end up being the victim again. It is already happening and will continue to happen

If black lives matter then why did you burn down their homes, their businesses, their vehicles? If black lives matter why are you stopping the authorities from coming out to protect them?

Why? Because real justice is not being sought or practiced. Man is not seeking real justice. He is being driven by injustice

To prove this, we need to look no further than the death of Jesus Christ

- *This event, beyond a shadow of a doubt is the greatest expression of injustice in human history*
- No event is more heinous, more unjust, more criminal than what happened in the arrest, trial, and execution of our Lord
- There is and was and will be no person more innocent than Jesus Christ
- There is no one more misrepresented, disenfranchised, or alone in being mistreated
- He is put to death because the powers in authority did not believe that He was the Christ
- He was put to death because of their unbelief. Because of their unbridled greed and lust for authority
- All of this is evident in their unjust actions

So as we look at Matthew 26:57-66 I want to show you six expressions of injustice. These are ways you can spot injustice at work. When you see these expressions of injustice, you are watching injustice operate and understand it for what it is

Before I give you these things let me setup God's dealings with mankind and what He has taught His people about justice

As I think about this subject of justice, I am reminded of my time back in West Palm Beach. I worked for a Jewish attorney in WPB. I remember one day this attorney broke out into a monologue on the values and virtues of our nations justice system

- He expressed his fondness for our justice system because it was anchored on the rigid and righteous demands of the law found in the Jewish traditions and it expressed the grace and mercy of the Christian traditions
- He is right. We have the best justice system in the world, if we will keep it
- We have a justice system anchored in God's instruction to man

God rescued Israel and delivered them to the promise land. Along the way He gave to them His law and taught them how to conduct themselves

- He taught them how to judge fairly and justly
- He taught them how to bring righteous verdicts and just consequences
- He taught them how to fashion the penalty to the crime

For example:

"If a malicious witness rises up against a man **to accuse him** of wrongdoing,¹⁷ then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days.¹⁸ "And the judges shall investigate thoroughly; and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely,¹⁹ then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.²⁰ "And the rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you.²¹ "Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." (Deut. 19:16-21 NAS)

There is so much stated in this which describes justice. In this passage there is a description of jurisprudence

- *Jurisprudence is the study of the science and practice of law*

Notice the kinds of things that Moses brings out here to establish justice:

1. Witnesses must be objective
2. Charges must be brought up against someone
 - a. Here we have the distinction between arraignment and an indictment
 - b. An indictment is charging someone with a crime
 - i. You are not trying to find a crime you are officially bringing charges against someone because there is evidence of their wrong doing as affirmed by witnesses
 - c. An arraignment is a public declaration someone is guilty by reading the charges against them and asking them to plea – either innocent or guilty
 - d. Then they go to trial
3. The witnesses or the facts must be affirmed and tested to see if they are true. Vs 18
 - a. There is a high standard for being a witness
 - b. You must speak truthfully
 - c. If you did not you would be held liable for the penalty you were trying to inflict on the accused

So if a person lied in a capital punishment case, like murder, the consequence would come upon the false witness if their testimony was found to be false

4. Judgment was to be impartial and fair. The penalty was to fit the crime
 - a. Eye for an eye
 - b. Tooth for a tooth
 - c. Life for a life
5. A person could not be condemned by their own testimony (we learn this from other passages)

"On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness." (Deut. 17:6 NAS)

"If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness." (Num. 35:30 NAS)

- A person could not be condemned solely on their own testimony
- They must have multiple witnesses against them
- There must be evidence

- There must be facts
- The truth must be discovered to validate the testimony
 - There had to be witnesses
 - Those witnesses would not be allowed to collaborate their stories

These are just a few of the righteous and just practices which are the basis of our justice system

In fact the Jewish system was very well developed. You can read the Mishna Sanhedrin in particular chapters 4-7 and learn about the practices in court

For a modern record of the Mishna see the website:

https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Sanhedrin?lang=bi

Kent Hughes quotes the summary of a scholar observing the Mishna:

“All criminal cases must be tried during the daytime and must be completed during the daytime. Criminal cases could not be transacted during the Passover season at all. Only if the verdict was Not Guilty could a case be finished on the day it was begun; otherwise a night must elapse before the pronouncement of a verdict, so that feelings of mercy might have time to arise. *Further, no decision of the Sanhedrin was valid unless it met in its own meeting place, the Hall of Hewn Stone in the Temple precincts.* All evidence had to be guaranteed by two witnesses separately examined and having no contact with each other. And false witness was punishable by death. . . Still further, in any trial the process began by the laying before the court of all the evidence of the innocence of the accused, before the evidence for his guilt was adduced.” Kent Hughes, *Preach the Word Commentary: Matthew*, pg 817

Now again if this commentary was based on the Mishna then this development of Jurisprudence came after the time of Christ

- It came in the late 100AD
- After the destruction of the temple
- But when you read the Mishna you see their thoughts and practices are anchored in ancient traditions and practices
- So it is reasonable to think and expect that many of these practices would be in place at the time of Christ

He was to be tried during the day

- He was to be accused of Crime with an official charge brought against him
- There were to be witnesses who were truthful
- There was to be time to hear the case out
- The trial was not to be rushed
- If there was a guilty verdict it was not to come within one day over multiple days
 - Some say that it would be at least three days
 - With the middle day being a day of fasting before an official verdict was read

You see the point is there are rules and practices to carry out true justice

- True Justice is concerned about upholding and protecting the righteous while exposing and condemning the wicked
- True justice establishes the facts and truth
- Look facts and truth protect the innocent and condemn the wicked

So that by the time of Christ there are basic assumptions about civil justice that all would expect and operate

The Basic Jewish rights entitled a person to:

1. The Right to a public trial
2. The Right of Self Defense
3. The Right to examine the accusers
 - a. Must have two or three witnesses against the accused
 - b. Those witnesses were held accountable for what they were giving witness

This was the bare minimum jurisprudence that would be expected during the time of Christ

The purpose of the Sanhedrin was to preserve and protect life, not destroy it. It was there to uphold righteousness. To do so swiftly so that the people feared sinning

But as we will see these practices were not followed with Christ

Christ would face His time in court. He would face three trials with the Jews and three trials with the Romans

Annas, Caiaphas and Caiaphas again

He would then face Pilate, Herod (Lk 23:8-12), and Pilate again under the Roman trials

Matthew sticks to the two major trials of Christ, one by Caiaphas and one attributed to Pilate

- *Matthew is not incorrect he is simply truncating the whole story*
- The whole story we get when we take all the gospel accounts together
- Luke and John seem to be the most thorough in their accounts of the Trials of Christ

Luke records (Lk. 23:8-12 NAS)

In understanding what was taking place during this time the details Matthew gives us and does not give us become more obvious

As I said there are six expressions of injustice found in this text

1. Abandoned Protocol vs 57-58
2. False Witnesses vs 59-62
3. False Charges vs 63-64
4. Abuse of Power vs 65-66
5. Hurried Verdict vs 66-67
6. Faulty Basis

We will look at one of these this morning and cover the rest next week

We start with the first expression of injustice, abandoned protocol

1. Abandoned Protocol vs 57-58

And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.⁵⁸ But Peter also was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome. (Matt. 26:57-58 NAS)

Now Matthew says here that Jesus was led to Caiaphas, the high priest

This is true, but this is not where Jesus went first

- You see there were two major religious and political parties
- Ultimate the opinion of two officials count the most
- The High Priest and the Roman Governor
- Caiaphas and Pilate
- Their decisions are the most critical so Matthew keeps our attention on them

Matthew Also keeps our attention on Peter

- Don't forget about Peter in this whole account
- He is coming along

As the end of verse 56 states

Matt 26:56

"But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Him and fled." (Matt. 26:56 NAS)

All the other disciples fled but Matthew is making it clear that Peter is following behind. Peter is watching what is taking place. It is also likely that much of our present information comes from the likes of men like Peter, John, and Joseph from Arimathea (Luke 23:50-51) who were a part of the dealings

"And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man⁵¹ (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;" (Lk. 23:50-51 NAS)

- This Joseph was the one who took the body of Christ and provided the tomb for Christ to be buried

So Matthew keeps us in the big picture but nestled in the grand vista of the big picture are the little details

- So Jesus is taken to Caiaphas but only after He makes a little trip to see Annas first
- And I do mean a little trip

Let me show you this. Turn over to John's account

John 18:12-14

“So the *Roman* cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,¹³ and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.¹⁴ Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.” (Jn. 18:12-14 NAS)

Now John indicates clearly here that Jesus was first taken to see Annas

- Annas as John indicates is the Father-in-law of Caiaphas
- Annas was the original high priest
- Since High Priest was a position that was permanent though Rome would not allow one to permanently operate in such a powerful role, Annas kept his title though he did not officially function in the position
- He Ruled through his sons and son-in-law
- The high priest office was a family business

Early in Matthew’s account when we talked about Jesus cleansing the temple and driving out the money changers and the animals that whole system was devised by Annas and operated by his son-in-law

Annas was making his money by selling religious services

So Jesus was a threat to his business. Jesus could bring unwanted attention from the Romans. Jesus could drive the people away from their racketeering efforts. Jesus could undermine their authority. Jesus was a serious threat

Now some people see a conflict in the accounts. This is another example of the synoptic problem. There appears to be a contradiction. How so?

- Well again John says that Jesus first goes to Annas

“And Simon Peter was following Jesus, and *so was* another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,¹⁶ but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought in Peter.” (Jn. 18:15-16 NAS)

- John Says that he brought Peter into the house of Annas – the High Priest
- But Matthew says that Peter was with Caiaphas
- So what is going on?

The answer is that the grounds of Annas and Caiaphas were shared

- While the two men had separate houses their property was shared so that they could easily interact

So in this account Jesus was first taken to Annas and then taken across the court over to Caiaphas

Let us get into some of the details now supporting our first point

The Abandoned protocol. This is to say they did not follow a proper Jurisprudence

First of all they did not go to the temple they went to the homes of the High Priest

- They were not taken before the official courts they were taken directly before the High Priest
- Now clearly other members were informed and allowed to attend but what safe guards were lost because they were not in the proper environment?
- They were holding court outside of the official residence
- In the official residence there are recorders and clerks and accountability. Here none of that

Secondly, the trial was held at night. This is why it is at their house and not in the Temple as it should be

- A trial was not to be heard at night, especially a trial which demanded capital punishment
- Plus there was not enough time for this trial to be heard as the Passover feast was coming
- Another reason why this trial had to be held at their home instead of in the official places

This trial is not about justice for it is abandoning all the protocols of justice

Thirdly, there is no charge against Jesus to demand an arrest. They are seeking to find an indictment

Notice Johns account again:

John 18:19

The high priest therefore questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching

- Here Annas starts to gather information
- He wants to know about what Jesus taught and who was following Him
- He wanted details

Annas is seeking to find something in the testimony of Christ to condemn Him with

- Again he is seeking to bring a charge against Jesus from His own testimony
- This violates Deut 17; Num 35
- Jesus calls Annas out on this hypocrisy and injustice

"Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.²¹ "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said."

You see Jesus' response here is nothing short of brilliant

- I have spoken in public and my words are well documented, where are the witnesses against me?
- Annas where is your charge? Where are the facts to be read at my arraignment?
- What do you have against me which I have publicly disclosed?

Annas is caught here in another breach of protocol

- The Sanhedrin is not the court to find charges it is the court to evaluate what has been charged
- The Sanhedrin hears cases and determines the wisdom of the case

- But here Annas is acting as the lower court seeking to find a charge to place on Christ before he offers Him over to Caiaphas
- I am sure Annas was seeking to make the accusation both legal and easy. The only problem is that He had nothing on Christ
- And Jesus just revealed that to Annas
 - You have the body of evidence where are my accusers

Ofcourse this is not a fair trial as we see in the next verse:

“And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?"

Jesus gets slapped in the face for having the audacity to point out that the High Priest was acting unjustly. This whole event is not about seeking justice. It is the practice of injustice. Every protocol of justice is being violated. Anna had no witness and no charges even when all the works and words of Christ were on public display

- You see the violent hatred of injustice
- *When someone dares ask for prudence and wisdom and Justice the unjust are filled with rage and violence*
- This is nothing new

The violence injustice brought out against Christ is exposed by Christ in what He says next:

“Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"

- He basically says “What justifies your actions?”
- What have I done wrong? You see injustice is not concerned about right and wrong. It is not concerned about getting to truth. It is not concerned about innocence and guilt. Its flames of hate are fueled by the desires of vindication
- They wanted Jesus to be wrong but had nothing against Him. But that did not stop the guard from slapping Jesus

We will come back to this because it also illustrates another expression of injustice, the abuse of power. But for now, let us keep our focus on the first evidence of injustice, the abandoning of proper protocols

In other words, the abandoning of Jurisprudence. They did not follow the law

- Met outside the proper courts
- Met in the middle of the night
- Met to find a charge they could bring rather than having one already

This is nothing more than a kangaroo court. An angry mob of religious and political figures quickly gathered together to find the evidence to justify their verdict

- This criminal is already guilty lets us find the proof

Friends that is INJUSTICE

- *One cannot claim to be following the law and seeking justice while abandoning due process*
- No one who abandons due process is seeking justice. NO ONE
 - It does not matter if you were oppressed
 - It does not matter if you were mistreated
 - It does not matter if you are held back or down or without in some way.
 - If you abandon the rule of law you abandon JUSTICE and you are the one seeking and practicing INJUSTICE

Annas is left red faced, exposed, and empty handed. He can do nothing to help Caiaphas in the deception. He has to send Christ to Caiaphas

“Annas therefore sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.” (Jn. 18:19-24 NAS)

This is where we pick up Matthew’s account

“And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.⁵⁸ But Peter also was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.” (Matt. 26:57-58 NAS)

Now here Matthew tells us that all the officials are gathered together

- The Scribes and the Elders
- The lawyers and the leaders of society
- They are all a part of this. Clearly this mob is in a frenzied state as they are treading in new territory here. They were seeking to have a trial that very night

Conclusion

Clearly they have their criminal and now it is time to condemn Him with a crime that will stick and give the Romans a reason to execute Him

This is true injustice

When we come back next week, we will look at more, if not all, of the remaining examples of injustice in the trials of Christ

Friends what I want you to see is how injustice works. The ways it is manifested

- Many are claiming they are facing injustice so they can act in accord with justice. When in reality they are not walking in justice at all. They are seeking to justify their vengeance
- Many who are carried away by their own lust, greed, and desires for power are willing to abandon true Justice to get what they want
- They are driven by out of control passions and the abandon all righteous protocol

True justice is established in truth and facts. Truth and facts which are carefully established and accurately presented. Truth and facts which are self-evident and obvious, and objective

True justice acts prudently, carefully, faithfully, and wisely

Injustice on the other hand abandons what is right and good

- It abandons due process
- It abandons seeking truth and evaluating the details
- It abandons objectivity and lives on the passions of the oppressed

We must preserve and protect justice. Without it no one will be treated fairly and everyone will be destroyed

If someone says to you, why should I wait for justice when someone has harmed me? The answer is because God has taught us to love our enemies. God has taught us to show compassion and mercy. God has taught us to walk justly and righteously before Him

- Listen if you seek justice hastily and take someone's life wrongly then you are a murderer
- These religious leaders murdered Jesus Christ
- They operated under the guise of seeking Justice but rather were acting unjustly

Justice is patient and acts according to the truth so that innocent is protected and the wicked are condemned. We will see more next week. Let us pray!