



The Reporter

June 2020

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“Social Justice and Jesus”

by Pastor Proeber

Prior to Jesus’ crucifixion and death, Caiaphas the high priest said, “You know nothing at all. You do not even consider that it is better for us that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:50). It was an unusual prophecy, yet it revealed a stunning truth. It was also taken completely out of context.

Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin saw this as the perfect opportunity to execute Jesus. According to them he was stirring up too much trouble and creating riots all over Palestine. From their perspective, in order to keep Rome from destroying the Jewish nation Jesus had to die. It was necessary. It was expedient. It was duly executed.

It is with great chagrin that we consider these events. Organized religion was corrupt. Civil authority was abused. People were uninformed and ignorant. This became the perfect storm which brought Jesus before Pilate and which sealed his crucifixion. All along the way, the jeering crowds protested, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

2000 years later we are troubled by this series of events. Yet we also recognize it was God’s will for Jesus to suffer, be crucified, and rise on the third day. As we consider what happened to Jesus, there are some observations we can make which are valuable in the light of what we see happening today.

Recently there has been a clamor for social justice. If you listen to what many are saying, this is what the country needs, and right now! Personally I am confused by the term, because it lacks a clear definition. Justice maintains rights afforded to citizens by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. These are clearly enumerated and defined. The confusion comes when the word social is attached. From what I can gather—and I could certainly be wrong—society has to determine what justice should look like.

Now, this sounds agreeable, fair, even attractive. There is a problem, however. When society determines what justice should be, does it actually have the qualifications needed to determine what is just or unjust, right or wrong? For example take society’s questionable value of life. People are less and less sensitive to the horrors of taking a human life. Violence is glorified. Vengeance is justified. Society cannot meet the challenge of determining what is just or unjust, because people are evil by nature. What else could come out of hearts which are filled with “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual sins, thefts, false testimonies and blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19).

Consequently, what kind of justice could a naturally evil society maintain or uphold? It would be at best a sliding scale of justice, but it would never ascend. It

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Justice, from page 1

would be in a constant state of decline. This was why Jesus was rejected. He refused to meet society's standards to provide justice. It became necessary for Jesus to die, so a different standard could be pursued—one more in keeping with what society demanded.

To be perfectly candid, we easily fall into the same trap. We try to put God's justice on a sliding scale. We want God's standards to conform to ours. The result is shocking and shameful. Because we are evil by nature, we expect God to become more tolerant of us and our evil. This is not justice. Nor is it something we should desire or demand.

One of God's many attributes is justice. He is holy and holds all accountable for not attaining holiness. This results in an eternity of separation from him—which is only just. Society, and we must include ourselves as part of society, bristles at the notion. We expect God to adapt to the times. We expect him to be more enlightened. We expect God to be more sensitive to the plight of human kind. Now this could result in a socially acceptable message, but it would hardly be just.

This is why we are grateful God doesn't change, nor will he ever change. His standard of justice will always be maintained consistently and objectively. Consequently, we always know where we stand with God. At the same time, we also rejoice to know God meted out his justice on his Son. Jesus endured the full weight of God's justice upon our sin. He suffered unjustly and intensely so that justice could be maintained. In enduring God's just sentence, he also revealed pure and undeserved love. As a result of Jesus' precious work we are declared not guilty. Not because the sentence was reduced, or a plea bargain was reached. Nor did God yield to the cries of social justice protestors. We are declared justified through faith in Jesus.

This for you and me needs to be the starting point when we entertain any discussion about justice. Ultimately society, that is sinful people, can never and will never arrive at a proper understanding of what justice should be. It is impossible to comprehend true, divine and error-free justice. In contrast, as believers in our Savior—people who have been declared not guilty—we know what justice is. God alone determines what that should be, and what the consequences should be. While it may be terrifying to stand beneath God's justice, we know where peace can be found. It is only through Jesus who was crucified because of society's justice that we are delivered from divine justice. It makes one think. It also makes one praise the Lord for what he has done.



Justification Lies Outside of Us, and In Christ

A Christian is righteous and holy by an alien or foreign holiness—I call it this for the sake of instruction—that is, he is righteous by the mercy and grace of God. This mercy and grace is not something human; it is not some sort of disposition or quality in the heart. It is a divine blessing, given us through the true knowledge of the Gospel, when we know or believe that our sin has been forgiven through the grace and merit of Christ.

Is not this righteousness an alien righteousness? It consists completely in the indulgence of another and is a pure gift of God, who shows mercy and favor for Christ's sake, . . . Therefore a Christian is not formally righteous; he is not righteous according to substance or quality—I use these words for instruction's sake. He is righteous according to his relation to something: namely, only in respect to divine grace and the free forgiveness of sins, which comes to those who acknowledge their sin and believe that God is gracious and forgiving for Christ's sake, who was delivered for our sins (Romans 4:25) and is believed in by us.

(What Luther Says, Justification, page 710-711)

Outreach Opportunities

The Outreach Committee met May 19th at 7:00 pm to reorganize outreach plans and activities for the summer. Some originally scheduled plans were canceled, or put under the “wait and see” category. Watch for more information as it becomes available. As we know much will remain in flux until the fall.

A proposed list of activities is provided below. Specific details will be coming in subsequent newsletters, as well as in the Sunday worship folder. Added suggestions are always graciously accepted.

Prayerfully consider how you can promote these activities with the people you know, encourage those who organize them, and most important, participate in them.

The next meeting will be July 14th at 7:00 pm.



2020 Events include:

- In July we hope to reschedule the Ice Cream Social and Game Night. It is usually planned for a Friday evening. What a way to get back to “normal!”
- August 23rd is the Beach, Bike & Barbeque at Goleta Beach. Area #3 is reserved, so start planning to be there for an enjoyable afternoon. From indications right now, the picnic areas are opening up at the County Parks, so there shouldn't be any problem in getting together.
- October 25th we will commemorate the Reformation with a pot-luck dinner and movie. The committee is currently considering the original “Luther” movie. It is a timeless classic even if it is in black and white.
- November 22nd will be the pre-Thanksgiving pot-luck and fellowship evening.
- November 26th will be the Thanksgiving Day worship service.
- December 20th is scheduled for church decorating, the chili dinner and caroling.
- December 24th is Christmas Eve worship and fellowship beginning at 7:00 pm.
- December 25th is Christmas Day worship and fellowship beginning at 9:30 am.

Other ideas are always welcome. Some events on the drawing board are a progressive dinner for September, as well as a special service of Thanksgiving and pot-luck once everything is back to normal. Another possibility is an outdoor service and barbeque in July or August.



June Birthdays

We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

- 9th - Sue P.
- 10th - Jaden S.
- 18th - Julie S.
- 20th - Roger J.
- 24th - Christina F.
- 29th - Landon S.
- 30th - Hilary S.

Notes & News



Music Update

While the “festival portion” of the church year came to an end rather abruptly, we rejoice in the blessings he did allow us to enjoy. We thank those who gave of their time to play the handbells and to sing in the mixed voice choir. We also look forward to September when practices will resume for the Fall and Winter.

As always, there is an open invitation for people to ring and sing. Neither requires specific skills, just a willingness to serve the Lord and a commitment to make practices. The Handbell choir practices on Monday evenings, and the mixed voice choir practices on Thursday evenings.

If you are interested in either of the choirs for the Fall, please speak with Debbie regarding the bell choir, or Pastor Proeber for the mixed voice choir.

Bible Class

The Sunday morning Bible Class will pick up where it left off, and continue through the summer. The current study is “God: the Great Humanitarian.” In light of current events, it is a wonderful review of God’s undeserved love and how he shows it to sinful people.

The Wednesday evening class will continue with its study on the Book of 2nd Kings. The current plan is to meet through the month of June, then take a break for July and August. Remember, we meet at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall.



Sunday School

Christian Education has been on hold for April, May and June. The plan is to restart this Fall with classes for younger and older children. As in the past, Sunday School is scheduled on the first and third Sundays of the month. Classes meet during the hymn of the day and the sermon. Please speak to one of the teachers for more information: Sonja Todd, or Sue Proeber.

Through the course of the summer, the Spiritual Growth Elder, teachers and pastor will review the past year and consider suggestions and potential changes to the program. If you have any questions regarding Sunday School, please speak with either of the teachers or John Favuzzi.

In our Prayers

Our Lord invites us to “pray continually.” Because of the power and blessing our Lord attaches to this invitation, we want to keep the following people in our prayers.

- We pray for those who remain in their homes because of health concerns; we especially remember Bill Waters (Mariposa), Sally and Dale Krause (home), Wilma Heidenrich (home), and Roseanne Cook (home).
- We pray for Emmalee Schroeder (Justin) as she is in the last weeks of her pregnancy, and for Marrissa Schueler (Josh), as she looks forward to her due date in October.
- We pray for all those who are struggling with the challenges caused by the stay at home and shut down orders; we also pray for those who are in positions of authority that they may follow God’s design for leadership and serve the people they represent.



Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck—gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to two pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Email to Pastor Proeber pastor.orlcsb@gmail.com

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

While this month's newsletter is shorter than usual, there is a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have made every issue more interesting. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber for advice. Thanks!

Meetings for June

Church Council	Tuesday June 9 th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday June 9 th at 8:00 pm

Voters Meeting

Sunday July 12th after the worship service

If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the Council—Greg Gruewald (worship), Josh Schueler (outreach / streaming), John Favuzzi (Spiritual Growth), Jim Brown (property / buildings), Al Todd (treasurer), or Jim Everson (financial secretary)



Streaming Continues

Since the end of February we have been video streaming our worship services. It has allowed us to meet the needs of our people who are home bound. Now that the “stay at home” orders are being lifted for church services, the question might be asked, “will the streaming continue?” The answer is yes.

Since our first service we have taken the time to acquire all the needed equipment to produce a quality stream long term. With a few exceptions, we have done remarkably well in a short time.

One of the last remaining pieces was to evaluate our audio reproduction capacity. When the PA system was originally set up, the thought never surfaced we would be live streaming. Consequently, the system did two things. One was to amplify the sound in the church, and the second was to record an audio file for the website. Little did we realize what would happen. Over the past few months we have experimented with different input configurations. Last Sunday was a marked improvement, but it was not a lasting solution. That has been resolved this week.

While not ready for this Sunday, we have purchased a new console mixer. It will simplify wiring, and will improve the overall quality and distribution of the sound. We look forward to its installation, and to maintaining the high standards we have set for our program.

Devotional Corner

Go!

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

What is the best way to grow the church? There are many different thoughts, opinions, and methods. The people who promote their approach believe theirs is the best. Unfortunately, many may not produce the promised results.

As a member of Jesus' Church on earth, and as a soul who has been purchased by the Savior, I need to understand the command the Lord gives. It is clear. It is succinct. It also leaves the results in his hands. Jesus' command is "go!" He also teaches how and why I should go.

I go with his authority. I am not an independent contractor. I serve because he has commanded me. I also serve knowing he will use me to proclaim his powerful Word which changes peoples' hearts and lives.

I go to make disciples. My purpose is to point people to their Savior. I undertake a specific work with specific instructions. I teach what Jesus has commanded. I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

I go with Jesus' promise. Certainly I will face many challenges as I take the message of repentance and forgiveness into a rebellious world. Many will reject, even despise what I want to share. My Savior offers me reassurance with the promise of his never-failing presence. I know I am not on my own. I know he has me in his loving care.

Go! It sounds so simple, yet I can make it so complicated. This is why I look to Jesus for forgiveness, for strength, for confidence, and for direction. In my Savior, and with his blessing, I can go.

Prayer

O Jesus, Lord of the Church and Lord of my life, you have commanded me to go and share the message which changes lives. Remind me of the strength which is mine. Remind me of the good news I proclaim. Remind me of your never failing presence.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as "podcasts."