

God's Responsive Justice (Micah 3)

To Read

1. II Kings 20:12-21
2. Romans 3:9-31

1 I. Introduction

A. This morning we are starting the second oracle in Micah's book

1. For the last two weeks we've been looking at Micah's first oracle in chapters 1 and 2
 - 1 a. And the theme or title we've given the first oracle is: God's justice is merciful
 - b. We saw that God was going to come down from heaven as a terrible judge to destroy those who had worshipped other gods and forsaken His covenant
 - c. This would happen to Samaria and the northern kingdom of Israel because of their rank idolatry, but judgment would also come to Jerusalem and Judah because their deeds demonstrated that they despised His covenant
 - d. Yet, at the end of the oracle, there was a promise - God would send a shepherd/king who would deliver His people and lead them out of the destruction
 - e. Although it could have, God's judgment didn't end in destruction, it ended in salvation: God's justice would be merciful, a mercy which we saw would be ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ
2. And this fits the theme of Micah
 - 1 a. Micah is watching the events around him and he sees God's justice, but he wonders: how can this be good for God's people? How can judgment and destruction benefit the people of God?
 - b. And the first oracle gives us the first answer: God's justice is merciful - it will not end with destruction but will continue on until salvation is provided for the people of God
3. The second oracle, which we are starting this week, is going to give another answer to Micah's question
 - 1 a. Why is God's justice good? Because God's justice is gracious - that is, God's judgment will not only eventually lead to salvation, but God's judgment will bring benefit to His people - judgment will turn out to be a gift from God
 - b. In this second oracle, which is Micah 3-5, we are going to see three sections or three portraits of God's justice
 - 1 i. In Micah 3, we are going to see God's Responsive Justice - God will react to the injustice of His people
 - 1 ii. In Micah 4, we are going to see God's Restorative Justice - God purpose for judgment extends beyond destruction
 - 1 iii. And in Micah 5, we are going to see God's Victorious Justice - a new king will reign over God's people and every enemy will be destroyed
 - c. These three sections will show us three ways that God's justice is gracious: that God's judgment is actually a gift to His people and that is what we are going to look for as we go through the second oracle
4. So the first oracle was likely set early in Micah's ministry before the Assyrian invasion and it predicted the coming invasion and even the cities that would be affected
 - a. This second oracle is likely somewhat later in Micah's ministry, and actually we can narrow in the dates of this oracle more than the rest of the book of Micah because it is actually quoted elsewhere in the Old Testament
 - b. In Jeremiah 26, the priests and the people were seeking to put Jeremiah to death for prophesying against Jerusalem but some wise men made an observation, Jeremiah 26:16-18 - *"This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God." And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people, saying, "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.'"*
 - c. This is a quote out of Micah 3 and dates Micah 3-5 to the reign of Hezekiah, near the end of Micah's ministry
 - d. This oracle is probably after the Assyrian invasion and the destruction of the Assyrian army - I can't be sure of this since the actual invasion happened at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, but there is no mention of the Assyrian's in this oracle and there is no mention of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom
 - e. Chapters 3-5 deal exclusively with Jerusalem and chapter 4 refers not to the Assyrians as the enemy, but to the Babylonians as a coming enemy
 - f. So, this second oracle looks beyond the Assyrian invasion and beyond the temporary revival under Hezekiah and says that judgment is still going to come because sin has not been rooted out - judgment must come, but judgment will turn out to be the gift of God to His people

1 B. Read Micah 3

1 C. Proposition: God demands justice of His people and will execute perfect justice on His people

- 1 1. The Injustice of God's People
- 1 2. The Justice of God
- 1 3. Pursuing Justice Ourselves

1 II. The Injustice of God's People

- As we look at Micah 3, we see that it is divided into three parts, addressed to three people:
- In verse 1, Micah addresses the heads and rulers of the people; in verse 5, Micah addresses the prophets; and in verse 9, Micah addresses the heads and rulers of the people again - so let's look at these three sections

1 A. In verses 1-3, addressed to the heads and rulers, we see that the powerful were callously oppressing the weak

1. Micah 1:1-3 - *And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?--- you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.*
2. God tells the rulers of Israel that they should have been those who knew, who upheld justice
3. But instead, they perverted justice - they loved evil and hated good, and this led to oppression - using and harming the people for their own benefit - the devastating image given in these verses is that the rulers were consuming the people like food - they were using them for their own benefit
4. The rulers were not looking out for the best of the nation, they were looking out for their own interests - these were the powerful men of Israel, the heads and rulers of the people, but they used their power to serve themselves instead of providing for their neighbor; they used their power to trample down their neighbor instead of build him up

2 B. But then, in verse 5, Micah denounces the prophets as well: the prophets sided with the powerful

1. Since there is something of a chiastic structure to this chapter (A-B-A), we know that the failure of the prophets is somehow related to the failure of the rulers - the prophets and rulers were working together in the same iniquity
1. Micah 3:5 - *Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.*
3. Micah says that the prophets supported the powerful instead of protecting the weak
 - 3 a. Kids, here's a review question: what were prophets supposed to do? (Speak the Word of God)
 - b. The prophets should have been speaking God's words, they should have been denouncing the injustice of the people and calling the powerful to protect and support the weak
 - c. But instead, the prophets, like the rulers, only looked out for their own interest - they decided they would support whoever gave them money, whoever fed them, and denounce those who did not provide for them
 - d. The prophets served money instead of God, and therefore the prophets ended up serving those who had money and power - instead of denouncing the actions of the powerful, they sided with the powerful against the weak
 - e. And think how terrible this was - the poor and weak who had no protector on earth would go to hear the voice of God and instead find the voice of an oppressor saying it was only right that they should be oppressed - their last hope would have been thwarted because the prophets chose money over God
4. The voice of God had gone silent in the midst of Israel because those who spoke with the voice of God chose to love the things of earth instead of the things of heaven - instead of denouncing injustice, the prophets only compounded it

2 C. Finally, in verses 9-11, Micah returns to the heads and rulers again: the leaders built their city with injustice

1. Micah 3:9-11 - *Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money..."*
2. These last verses are the culmination of God's indictment against Israel - their injustice had reached such a scale that their entire society was built on injustice - their society was designed to serve the powerful at the expense of the weak
 - a. In fact, their injustice had reached the point where God could say that their capital, Jerusalem, was built in blood - it was built on the back of the weak and helpless, it was built through oppression
 - b. And all the privileged members of society had worked together to do this:
 - i. The heads dispensed justice for money, for bribes instead of upholding righteousness - they used their positions to pervert justice to serve those who had money and therefore make money for themselves
 - ii. The priests taught 'God's law' for money instead of truly teaching God's law - they used their position to pervert the law of God to serve those who had money therefore make money for themselves
 - iii. And the prophets prophesied for money instead of speaking the Word of God - they used their position to pervert the voice of God to serve those who had money therefore make money for themselves
 - c. Their society had been built on a love of money and had become a society that served wealth and therefore society served those with wealth and power at the expense of the poor and weak - Zion had been built in blood
3. Instead of being a place where the poor and weak were shown the grace of God, where the foreigner and sojourner were given a place and a home, where the kingship and priesthood were used to display God's glory and mercy - instead God's land had become a place of injustice and oppression and God's character was not found amidst His people

2 D. In sum, we could say that God's people had failed to do justice, but this brings up the question: what is justice?

1. The word 'justice' here is *mishpat*, and we've studied this word before because it appeared in the title of the third section of the covenant at Sinai - *Now these are the judgments that you shall set before them.* (Exodus 21:1)
 - a. This word does mean justice like we usually think of justice - the justice that exists to restrain and punish evil doers - and this is what I'm going to call retributive justice
 - b. And *mishpat* definitely includes retributive justice, it is not less than retributive justice but it is much more - it contains retributive justice but is not limited to that
 - 1 c. So, Bruce Waltke defines *mishpat*: *The basic meaning of this word is "to establish the heavenly norm or pattern on earth." Normally this concept is applied to society, i.e., the bringing of society into the right order or arrangement. In this sense it is translated "justice." But in three passages its meaning is applied to a building. In Exodus 26:30; 1 Kings 6:38; and Ezekiel 42:11 this word is used in reference to the design of the tabernacle, the temple of Solomon, and the future temple prophesied by Ezekiel, respectively. Significantly, in all these passages it refers to the design or arrangement of God's dwelling place.*
 - 1 d. In other words, justice has to do with having a well-ordered society under God that reflects God's character - retributive justice is one sliver of that because it is the response of justice to injustice, but the Biblical concept of justice incorporates all of the ordering of society in order to reflect who God is
- 1 2. If I was going to give a really simple definition of Biblical justice, it would be this: doing the right thing by your neighbor
 - a. This is what the section on justice, the *mishpat* given in Exodus 21 deals with - how will a faithful Israelite reflect God's character in the land by doing good to his neighbor? Exodus 21-23 gives snapshots of what justice looks like in God's land
 - b. And often justice, doing the right thing by your neighbor, looks like giving of yourself to serve your neighbor - putting his interests above your own interests - it means thinking about what your neighbor needs and figuring out how you can provide that for him
 - 1 c. So Justice can be summed up as the second part of the greatest commandment, Mark 12:28-31 - *And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*
 - 1 d. In fact, Paul says that this command sums up the law, Romans 13:8-10 - *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*
 - 1 e. Or again, Galatians 5:14 - *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*
 - f. Justice, the fulfilment of the law, was to love your neighbor - to reflect God's kindness and love to His people by showing that same kindness and love to those around you
3. And this is exactly what Israel had failed to do
 - a. The rulers and priests and prophets, instead of loving and serving their weak and poor brethren in the land used their power to serve themselves at the expense of the poor
 - b. They had looked to their own interests, not the interests of their neighbors and they had built their wealth and their power at the expense of the poor and helpless
 - 1 c. Kid's question: Who will God judge? Those who ignored His law of love.

2 E. And this injustice had turned the land into a terrifying place

- 1 1. Listen again to Micah 3:1-3 - *And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?--- you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.*
2. The language used in these verses is meant to show the horror of the injustice of the land - Micah compares the injustice to cannibalism, and these verses are hard to read and hard to imagine
- 1 3. But this was the result of injustice - they were figuratively consuming one another, especially the powerful consuming the weak - as Micah had said in chapter 2 - *Arise and go, for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction.*
4. The land had become a terror and a horror, especially to the weak and powerless, it had ceased to be a land where God's perfect rest was displayed
5. Which brings us to our next point:

1 III. The Justice of God

- If the people and the land has descended into such injustice, we would expect that God would act to right the situation
- If God's land is full of injustice and God stands by and does nothing, then we would rightly charge God with injustice as well - He is supporting and sustaining a land of injustice
- But God does not stand by and affirm injustice, instead Micah speaks God's judgment against injustice - God's actions to right the wrongs of His people and restore the order of the land - to restore His land to a place of rest and rejoicing
- So after each section describing the injustice of the rulers and the prophets, God responds to the injustice with judgment, and let's look at those three responses

1 A. The powerful who callously oppressed the weak will be callously oppressed by God

1. After denouncing the heads and rulers of the people, Micah speaks God's judgment against them, Micah 3:1-4 - *And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?--- you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron. Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil.*
2. The heads and rulers of Judah had destroyed the weak without remorse and in response, God says that He will destroy them without remorse - when destruction comes from God, He will not listen to them or answer them; He will hide his face from them
3. They had callously oppressed the people and they would be callously oppressed by God, their evil will come full circle

2 B. The prophets who lied in God's name will lose God's Word

1. We'll continue with Micah 3:5-8 - *Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths. Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God. But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.*
2. The prophets had spoken contrary to the word of God to support the powerful against the weak and so God would take His word away from them - it would be night to them and deep darkness and they would put their hands over their mouths in shame because there would be no word from God
3. Instead, the word of God would go to the prophet who faithfully spoke God's Word - Micah would be the mouthpiece of God, taking their place and thrusting them out
4. They had lied in God's name and they would lose God's Word, their evil will come full circle

2 C. The leaders who built their city with injustice will see their city raised to the ground

1. Micah concludes with Micah 3:9-12 - *Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.*
2. Society had been founded in injustice, the capital had even been built in blood and therefore the capital would be completely destroyed - the walls would be knocked down, the city plowed over and the Temple mount would become a forested wilderness
3. The injustice of the rulers, priests and prophets would not pay out in the end - in the end they would lose everything that they had built up, their injustice will have served them nothing because everything they had gained through injustice will be destroyed
4. They had built their city with injustice and they would see their city raised to the ground, their evil will come full circle

2 D. In sum, we could say that God's justice is just - it is right, that is the punishment fits the crime

1. God's pronouncement of punishment in this chapter follows a clear pattern
 - a. God will return the evil of the powerful back on their own heads - we could say that He will repay evil for evil
 - b. What the powerful had sown in injustice would be reaped in destruction - their actions had consequences and the consequences would match the crime and fill it perfectly
 - c. God's justice would bring justice to injustice, it would right the wrong
2. In fact, this is what God promises across the Scripture - sin will lead to its just consequence
 - a. This is the meaning of the oft repeated phrase - you will reap what you sow
 - 1 b. So, Proverbs 22:8 says - *Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail.*
 - 1 c. Or Job 4:8 says - *As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.*
 - 1 d. Galatians 6:7-8 - *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*
 - 1 e. So this truth doesn't only apply to sin and injustice, righteousness and justice will reap its right reward in the end as well, Hosea 10:12 - *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*
 - 1 f. God's justice will bring sin to its right conclusion, when God's displays His justice we will be able to answer Abraham's question in the affirmative, Genesis 18:25 - *Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"*
 - g. The God of all the earth will do what is just - His justice will destroy the injustice of earth and bring wrong to right again, injustice will fail in the fire of God's justice
 - 2 h. Kid's question: What will God do to judge them? He will return evil for evil.
3. God will make sure that Justice wins in the end: everyone will have their just deserts
 - a. And, if we're honest, this is a longing of our heart - when we see injustice we long for it to be made right, we long for the perpetrator to be brought to justice and the oppressed to be made right
 - b. And God vows that this is exactly what He will do - He will bring the perpetrator to justice and right the wrong
 - c. Now, we shouldn't get caught in the trap that we know when this punishment will happen
 - i. When we know that God will bring injustice back on the head of the unjust, we could be tempted to think that God will do this right away and be disappointed when He doesn't
 - ii. Or we could look at sorrow in someone's life and declare that this is God's punishment for injustice when God has not declared that
 - iii. But even in our chapter here in Micah 3, God promises that He will bring justice to injustice, but we know that the promise of Micah 3 didn't reach its first fulfillment for several generations after Micah - those who perpetrated injustice did not see God's justice come quickly and many would say they didn't see God's justice come at all
 - iv. But this helps us understand - God's justice comes in God's perfect time and at the end we will be able to stand and say that the God of all the earth has done right - before the end we may not be able to see justice fulfilled
 - d. God's justice will win, even if God delays justice according to His perfect plan
4. And this gives great hope to those who are oppressed
 - a. Even when it appears that the oppressor wins - when the rulers and the priests and the prophets all stand with the oppressor and there is no other appeal to be made on earth, the oppressed can still take hope that God will repay and right the wrong - their oppressor will not prevail because God will bring justice to pass

2 E. So Justice will destroy the terror of the land

- 1 1. Remember that the overarching question we are looking for in Micah is: why is God's justice good?
- 1 2. And here we can clearly see that God's justice is good because it destroys the terror of the land - injustice had turned the land into a terrifying place, but God's justice would destroy injustice and restore the justice of the land
3. No longer would the land be a terror and a horror, it would be refined and purified and the evil would be purged from its midst - God's judgment would come as a refining fire to destroy injustice
- 1 4. Kid's question: Why is God's judgment good? It removes the evil of the land.

1 IV. Pursuing Justice Ourselves

- As we finish this morning, I want to turn and think about ourselves and try to make some application of this passage
- So I want to make two applications this morning, two ways we should respond to Micah 3

1 A. We should long for sin to be destroyed

1. God's promise in this passage is that injustice will not prevail, and we ought to rejoice in that and long for that day when God's judgment will be executed and injustice will perish from the earth
2. This may not seem like a Christian attitude, but we actually see it upheld all over the Bible
 - 1 a. For example, think about all of the imprecatory Psalms, like Psalm 137:7-9 - *Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!" O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!*
 - b. The Psalms long for justice to be restored and for injustice to be destroyed and that ought to be our desire as well - our desire is not wrong when we see injustice and desire for that injustice to be repaid
 - c. Now, where we could go wrong is if we take it into our own hands to repay injustice that we perceive has been done against us - we ought to long for injustice to be repaid, but we rest that longing in God who will repay
 - 1 d. So Paul says, in Romans 12:19 - *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*
 - e. But that desire should rightly be there - we shouldn't love injustice and we shouldn't want injustice to stand - we should desire for injustice to be destroyed and for the world to be made right again
 - f. And so we long for that day and cry out to God to come with justice and to right the wrongs that have been done, we should cry out to God to come and destroy sin and purge sinners from the earth
3. But, and this is a big but, we need to desire not only for other's sin to be destroyed, but our own sin to be destroyed
 - a. We need to have a deep longing for sin to be destroyed and if we don't have this longing we ought to cultivate it, but we also shouldn't be blindly hypocritical in that desire - if we want sin to be destroyed, we must long for our own destruction as well
 - b. If we come to a passage like Micah 3 and believe that it is not talking about us, that the judgment promised won't touch us, then we haven't read our hearts well - all of us have failed in justice, we have all failed to love our neighbors as we ought and God hates that, He must destroy that - and we ought to agree with God's judgment
 - c. But this seems like a quandary: how can we long for our own destruction so that justice can be upheld? Do we not long for mercy for our sins? Should we want to be destroyed with the wicked?
 - d. This is the conflict of the Christian life: a desire for justice and a desire for mercy - but mercy cannot mean the failure of justice - mercy cannot mean that sin and injustice were not repaid, that injustice was allowed to stand - and this is what brings us to the Gospel
4. We need a way for our sin to be destroyed without destroying us - we need someone to come and execute justice on our sin while also showing mercy to us
 - a. And this is what Jesus did at the cross - God's justice was satisfied at the cross, injustice was not allowed to stand and God vented His wrath against injustice on His Son at the cross
 - b. The sin of God's people was repaid and destroyed at the cross - and so our longing can be fulfilled without our final destruction because we can be destroyed at the cross of Christ, our sin can meet its end at the cross of Christ
 - 1 c. So Paul rejoices that he died at the cross, that his sin was destroyed at the cross - Galatians 2:20 - *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
 - d. We ought to long for justice to be done against sin; we ought to long for justice to be done against our sin and justice has been executed against sin at the cross, so we can go and embrace the cross and rejoice that sin has been repaid
5. But if our sin has been judged and destroyed at the cross, then we ought to live in light of that truth
 - 1 a. We can't long for our sin to be destroyed and rejoice that it has been destroyed at the cross and continue living in sin - in fact, Paul reacts strongly to this in Romans 6:1-4 - *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*
 - b. If we desire for sin to be destroyed and for justice to prevail, then we must be destroying sin in our lives - we can't allow sin and injustice to continue unabated in our lives, we must be at war with our sin
6. So we ought to have an intense desire for sin to be repaid, for justice to prevail - but that desire should find its first subject in us - we ought to desire for our own sin to be destroyed and we ought to be destroying our sin

2 B. We should be people who love justice

1. If God loves justice which means loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we ought to be known as people who love our neighbors and seek justice for the oppressed
 - a. And our passage is specifically talking about societal justice - this passage calls God's people to love social justice, to work for a society that upholds justice for all people at its core
 - b. And I want to encourage us to do this - often the evangelical church is wary of talking about social justice because so-called 'progressive churches' have taken social justice and used it in lieu of the gospel even in ways contrary to the gospel and we rightly don't want to be associated with that
 - c. But God clearly desires for His people to establish a society where justice is found - where each one loves his neighbor and looks out for his neighbor's good - where oppression is rooted out and not allowed to survive
 - d. So we ought to work to establish a society that upholds this type of justice - but this is where it gets complicated because we need to think about where this society is
12. We should make the church a place where justice shines forth
 - a. As we switch from the Old Testament to the New Testament, God's people are no longer a worldly kingdom and so our primary responsibility for establishing a just society does not have to do with the countries we reside in
 - b. Instead, it has to do with the people of God and the new society that we are building in Christ: the church
 - c. The church should be a place that, in contrast to the world, upholds this broader sense of justice - a place where each one loves his neighbor and works for his good; a place where the poor and weak are protected and provided for, where the foreigner is given a place and the sojourner welcomed, where power is used to serve others
 - d. So we ought to labor to make the church that sort of place, we ought to labor to make these verses true:
 - 1e. A place where power is used to serve and not to be served: Matthew 20:25-28 - *But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*
 - 1f. A place where all are welcomed as equal in Christ: Colossians 3:11 - *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*
 - 1g. A place where the wealthy are not exalted and the poor are not despised: James 2:1-8 - *My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*
 - h. Injustice and oppression of any sort have no place in the church - we ought to be forming a society that stands against the injustice of the world and shows that our God loves justice
23. But then, I would also say our actions in the world should be oriented toward justice
 - a. Now, as soon as we exit the church and enter the world, our pursuit of justice gets complicated and it is not always clear either what the right way to pursue justice is or what our responsibility for upholding justice is
 - b. So I'm not going to tell you how to uphold justice in the world, but that ought to be our desire - we should be known in the world as those who love justice and hate injustice - and there is much injustice in our world
 - c. The powerful do not defend the weak but instead celebrate infants being destroyed in their mother's womb
 - d. The rich do not care for the poor but instead seek to enrich themselves at every opportunity
 - e. The foreigner and sojourner are not welcomed but instead despised and cast out and looked on as dangerous
 - f. And our country has a history and legacy of discriminating against minorities - a legacy that has not been fully expunged and addressed
 - g. Now, what we should do about these things is not always clear - but we clearly should not be supporting such injustice and as the opportunity arises we should oppose such injustice, so as you interact with the world, make sure your actions are oriented toward justice and love, and opposed to injustice and oppression
 - h. Even as we go vote for our leaders in a couple weeks, make this one of your considerations: does this person uphold and pursue justice in the way that God desires society to be founded in justice? Unfortunately, I find all too often that no candidate pursues justice this way which makes it hard to know how to vote - but that ought to be our goal: to vote for those who uphold justice and love in every area of society