

July 26, 2020

The Role of the church in this time of opportunity; COVID-19, racial unrest and political upheaval!

"Social" Justice Lacks Biblical Support!"

1 Corinthians 7:17-24 (ESV) Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.

Introduction

In the midst of the virus, racial unrest, political upheaval what should the church be doing?

Do what is good

Love justice, insure that justice is being done

Love being kind, work hard on loving one another

What is going on in the "Evangelical" church?

The enemy is out to eradicate from society not a "god" but the God of the Bible

Now we are in the midst of fighting the battle for the "sufficiency" of the Word of God

Is the Bible sufficient to deal with the complex issues of the day? Racism, Misogyny, Homophobia

Last Sunday we began to take a look at the history of "social justice" and the effect it is having on the church

We saw that "justice" is as old as the law, Genesis 9:6, Exodus 20:13-17

We talked about feeding the hungry, tending to the young, caring for the ill

We looked at current definitions for social justice

Social justice today entails a "redistribution" of resources from those who have "unjustly" gained them to those who justly deserve them (these

"unjust" and "deserving") are chosen as groups and not as individuals

What was the designers intent for "social justice"?

Originally a Catholic term, first used about 1840 for a new kind of virtue (or habit) necessary for post-agrarian societies (recently the term has been hijacked by secular "progressive" thinkers to mean uniform state distribution of society's advantages and disadvantages)

Social justice in the early stages was intended to bring about association and cooperation with others to accomplish ends that would benefit the whole community

It was a discussion on how moving from a farming culture to an industrial society could be done and the needs of the family could still be met

Please listen very carefully to this quote, *"If people are to live free of state control, they must possess this new virtue of cooperation and association"*

We cannot be pressured into buying into all this separation, division and segregation

Michael Novak, a George Frederick Jewett Scholar in Religion, Philosophy, and Public Policy has helped with our discussion this morning with an article he wrote in 2009

Cooperation and association have been used in great ways in the United States

These traits are hallmarks of free and capitalistic cultures

The first known usage of the term, social justice, was by an Italian priest, Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio, who wrote a book about the need for recovering the ancient virtue of what had been called "general justice" in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, but in a new contemporary form

He gave it the term "social justice"

Taparelli was not sure what he was looking for but knew that the change from a agrarian culture to more of a city culture brought with it challenges
The movement from the country to the cities, moving away from the family providing for the family's food, becoming wage-dependent, family members going to work in different locations was huge strain on the family

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII began to see this same situation

The stress on families to deal with this new lifestyle was real

Leo XIII wrote a paper, a letter to the churches throughout the world, entitled, "Rerum Novarum" (the evils of equality) (creating sameness) in 1891
These were different times

He wrote to address the strain on families moving from an agrarian culture into an industrialized culture

What was a Pope doing writing about economic and social matters?

The crisis in the family in 1890 was something the Pope knew needed to be addressed

He wanted to call attention to the fact that societies were now being organized on an entirely different principle than in the whole preceding history of Christianity

Earlier, almost all Christians had been farmers or associated with farming

When we read the New Testament, we see that quite vividly; the good shepherd, the sower of the seed, almost all of the parables are agrarian in background. But more and more people were not living agrarian lives

That's when Pope Leo XIII started to address what was happening using what Taparelli had begun

Let me read you from the paper:

The threat the Pope sees is socialism, the theory of giving the state total power

Very early in his encyclical (*en sic la cal*), he writes first about "civil society"

For Leo, "civil society" is a good term; "civil" comes from the Latin for the town, the city, the citizen

It gains its force from the experience of the medieval towns, centers of safety, commerce, craftsmanship, and prosperity--the highest prosperity and the greatest freedom

That's where the universities were; that's where the new commerce was; and that's where people came from far and near to examine the goods that came from many regions and to set up trade arrangements

Here is Pope Leo XIII's attack on the very ideal of equality as a social ideal

Here are some quotes from Leo and his paper "Rerum Novarum" (the evils of equality)

"That in civil society, the lowest cannot be made equal with the highest"

"There are truly very great and very many natural differences among men"

"Neither the talents nor the skill nor the health nor the capacities of all are the same"

"This leads to unequal financial success directly related to these God given endowments"

Socialists can labor as they may and to the their best ability but they will be striving against nature and God's Word and their labor will be in vain

These words are in one of the older translations of the paper

But here is the more modern translation on the Vatican Web site:

"It must be first of all recognized that the condition of things inherent in human affairs must be dealt with and accepted"

"It is impossible to reduce civil society to one dead level"

There naturally exists among mankind manifold differences of the most important kind; mental capacity, skill, health, strength; and unequal financial success is a product of this inequality

It is a simple thing to see and understand

This inequality is not a disadvantage to the individual or the community but an advantage

Society benefits from the various capacities and affinities for enterprise they have been given

Each person operates in the gifts and in the station of life that God has given them and placed them in
What a great benefit to the community

Community life requires varied aptitudes and diverse services (in Nashville we have 2 Surgeons, 5 veterinarians, to many lawyers, 100's of teachers, 100 of farmers, 100 of timbers workers, 4-5 electricians, 4-5 plumbers, and many productions workers that provide the food and things that we need to live our daily lives

In my circle, how many Spurgeon's, Whitefield's, Moody's, MacArthur's are there?

Most are preachers preaching in obscure and small churches and we are just to do our part where God in His providence has placed us

Leo XIII did not mean by "social justice" equality
Leo held that it's good that there's an unequal society

Some people are fitted for different kinds of work, and it's wonderful to be able to find the work that fits our talents and to use them for God's glory wherever He has providentially placed us

Summary

So let us ask ourselves as we consider this lack of equality, this lack of sameness

Where does the providence of God and His sovereignty fit in?

Social justice says that God created everyone the same and equal and if not so "we" are to make them that way

What says the Scripture?

Genesis 1:26-28 ESV Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the

earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

**27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.**

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Social justice says that the lowest on the social and economic scale ought to be made equal with the highest

What says the Scripture?

Mark 14:7 (ESV) For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me.

James 2:5 ESV 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?

Social justice says we are to be desirous of more and what others have

What says the Scripture?

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (ESV) But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

Again quoting again Leo XIII

"It must be first of all recognized that the condition of things inherent in human affairs must be dealt with and accepted"

"It is impossible to reduce civil society to one dead level"

Social justice is nothing but more "political correctness"

It is nothing more than having a great desire to make everyone happy and to be the friend of all
It is nothing more than people pleasing and ignoring God

It is nothing more than making excuses for the sins of self-identified, wronged and supposedly oppressed groups

It is nothing more than having a great desire to be liked by all and not vilified by any

It is nothing more than another way to silence those who might say, "What says the Scripture?"

It is nothing more than having a desire to be looked upon as one who has concern and compassion for all while overtly and intentionally ignoring the consequences of "known and willful" sin

So what does the Word of God say?

1 Corinthians 7:17 (ESV) Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

Romans 9:14-23 ESV What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have

compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is

molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

What is truth? Roots of the present crisis, Os Guinness

"Author and social critic Os Guinness traces our nation's current political and cultural crises back to two competing views of government and humanity. One is rooted in the American Revolution and its biblical foundation; the other is rooted in the French Revolution and subsequent Marxist revolutions in Russia and China.

"Which view will prevail: the one that acknowledges man's fallen nature and so insists upon the biblical idea of separation of powers, checks and balances and yet preserves ordered liberty and "unalienable rights," or one that believes that man is perfectible, and that utopia can be reached by liberating the oppressed from the oppressor?"

The following, edited for length, is Os Guinness' speech at BreakPoint.org's annual Wilberforce Weekend featuring 20 of the leading Christian worldview thinkers:

The climax of the Revolutionary War was Yorktown in 1781, and tradition has it that when the British and Haitian troops marched out to surrender they were ordered to play "A World Turned Upside Down." That was a ballad that went back to the English Revolution, and the idea was deeply biblical.

Some of the English revolutionaries said that "freedom is the man who dares to turn the world upside down." We all know that when Paul came to Thessalonica the agitators said, "These men who've turned the world upside down have come here."

What was the biblical idea?

God created order. Humans through sin create disorder, so God is working to restore his world, and as we come to know him with our gifts and callings, we become partners with him covenantally to help restore it. So when we turn the world upside down, we're turning upside down the status quo of our day in order to turn the world the right way up.

That was the idea in the English Revolution, a lost cause that failed. But it was the first of the five great major revolutions of the modern world beginning with the English in 1642, the American in 1776, the French in 1789, the Russian in 1917, and the Chinese (I was there as a small boy) in 1949.

The first two are very close. The English Revolution failed, the American Revolution succeeded, but both were biblical. Through the invention of printing and the power of the Reformation, the 17th century was called the biblical century, and the great model was the Hebrew Republic from the book of Exodus.

The French revolution was expressly anti-biblical, anti-Christian, anti-religious and anti-clerical. The hostility to religion and certainly to the Christian faith in the church has been a characteristic of the French and the Russians and the Chinese ever since.

Why does that matter?

It is the deepest key to the crisis of the republic today. Many people point out that America is as deeply divided now as in any moment since just before the Civil War, but why?

Some blame the president, but he is not the cause; he is the consequence of it. Some look at social media, but it is the reinforcement of it, not the root. Some say it's the clash between the coastals, California and New York, against the heartlanders in the Midwest and so on, and that is partly true. Others say that the clash is between nationalists and populists against the globalists--George Soros and like people who believe in a borderless world--and that's partly true, too.

But I would argue, and I'm not alone, the deepest division of all is the division of those who understand the republic and freedom from the perspective of 1776 and the American Revolution which was largely but sadly not fully biblical and those who understand America and freedom from the perspective of the French Revolution and its heirs.

The French Revolution lasted only 10 years. Then came Napoleon, a dictator, and he said, "The French Revolution is over." But like a huge volcanic explosion, the lava, as it were, of the revolutionary faith has flowed out ever since then.

If you take the three great ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality, the French Revolution did almost nothing for liberty; think of the reign of terror. But the ideal of fraternity or brotherhood was the first we picked up, and

it flowed into what was called revolutionary nationalism in the 19th century.

And that gave rise to the unification of Italy, the independence in Greece, and even to the thinking behind Theodore Herzl and the rise of Secular Zionism and the restoration of Israel.

In the 20th century, through the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century, it was the third element, equality, which picked up revolutionary socialism. Obviously that's behind the Russian Revolution and the Chinese Revolution.

What we're seeing in the 21st century is the French Revolution breaking out in terms of what's now known as cultural or Neo-Marxism with its central philosophy "Critical Theory."

In the 1920s an Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, sat in jail under Mussolini and tried to figure out why Marxism never happened as Marx predicted. He basically shifted from the economy to culture and from the proletariat revolution in the streets to what he called the hegemony of the dominance of the cultural elites, the gatekeepers.

His ideas flow down into the Frankfurt School. In America particularly, through the thinking of Herbert Marcuse, who's very important in 1967 and 1968 when he and Rudi Dutschke, the leader of the Red Army Faction in Germany, called for a long march through the institutions.

What do they mean?

I first came to this country in 1968. Martin Luther King had been assassinated in April; later Senator Bobby Kennedy, and later still the so-called Chicago police riots at the Democratic convention. One hundred American cities were ablaze. and yet the radicals knew that would not mean victory. So what was the long march?

They needed to be more patient and win the colleges and universities, the press and the media, and the world of entertainment in Hollywood. Then they would have cultural hegemony and cultural dominance in the gatekeeper class. And a little over 50 years later, we can see they won.

Ideas like political correctness, postmodernism, tribalism, sexual revolution, and the current rage for socialism go back to the years of the French Revolution in 1789; they have nothing to do with the American Revolution in 1776 and its biblical roots.

The big difference between now and the 1850s is that there is no Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln addressed the evil of the time: slavery, in light of what he called the better angels of the American character. He appealed to the Declaration of Independence.

We have people today saying Make America Great Again. But no one is talking about what made America great in the first place. It was not the military. It was not the economy.

So it's very important to see how different the ideas are which flowed from the French Revolution and the ideas which flowed from the American Revolution.

Think of St. Paul writing a letter to the Galatians. He says, "Who has bewitched you?" You switched from the gospel of grace to a gospel of works. And in many ways what I'm saying today is: Who has bewitched America?

It's in the process of switching from the gospel that came from the American Revolution to the gospel that came from the French Revolution, which is bad news.

The American Revolution was rooted in the scripture in Exodus, Deuteronomy, the Torah, and through the teachings of Calvin, Zwingli, Bullinger, Knox, and Cromwell. Cromwell says the Exodus is the direct parallel to what he was trying to do in the English Civil War; those ideas came over with the Mayflower, then John Winthrop, and then New England.

So what was the lost cause in old England became the winning cause in New England. The roots are completely different to the French roots: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and later thinkers from the French enlightenment.

A second difference is their understanding of humanity. The biblical American Revolution is realistic. A separation of powers in the Old Testament suddenly becomes the idea behind the American separation of powers, checks and balances, which comes from James Madison through John Willis Menard.

Why? Because we are fallen. Ambition to counteract ambition, checks and balances because of egotism, and so on. The French Revolution was utopian. Man is born free, Rousseau said, yet everyone is in chains, so just remove a chain or two through politics, education, psychology, whatever, and humans will be happy and free and fulfilled. This is nonsense, and you can see in the Russian Revolution, the French Revolution and the Chinese Revolution that utopianism was disastrous.

Whenever there's a gap between the ideal and the real, the gap will always be filled with force and violence, and that's why utopianism is the father of the worst evils and violence.

Take a third difference: the whole notion of constitution. Many Americans don't realize that the American Constitution--"We The People"--comes from the Hebrew notion of covenant, and you can see the incredible difference today. For the people in our secular world thinking in more of a French style, constitution is simply law, contract, and interests. No, no--go back to Exodus and you can see the Sinai covenant is freely chosen consent.

That is the origin of the consent of God. It's a morally binding pledge, and a matter of the reciprocal responsibility of all for all. So covenantal constitutionalism includes the notion of freedom, and trust, and trustworthiness, and a cause that binds together truth and love. Which is the theme this weekend.

Take another major difference: the way the two revolutions address wrongs. They both agreed there are wrongs and injustices and oppressions in the world. But in the French style and according to the understanding of Critical Theory, what you look for is the majority and the minority, the oppressors and the oppressed. People have power, and people are the victims of power. And then there is no truth. Remember, according to Nietzsche, God is dead, truth is dead, everything is only power.

Critical Theory becomes a way of exploiting victimhood in order to change the status quo to a new one. But it's based only on power, so it becomes the new problem replacing the old problem, and retaliation of wrongs answered by revenge goes on and on and on, and you have a Corsican blood feud written large in the culture warring of America.

That's where we are today, and quite literally, there will be no end to it with talk of reparations and so on.

Now compare that with the biblical way of putting things right and addressing wrongs. Evil is addressed as evil, but then the possibility of repentance (Teshuvah in Hebrew and Metanoia in Greek) has an idea of radical and complete about-turn.

But then repentance is followed by forgiveness, freeing and cutting off the past completely and freeing the future from the burden of the past.

So you work towards a reconciliation in which enemies can be made truly friends, as Abraham Lincoln used to say, as we see very much in the early church. So you think of the early church and its idea of the Pax Christi,

peacemaking under God, far better than Pax Romana, the Roman Peace.

The Roman peace, say many of their historians like Tacitus, is a peace through power, though a peace when one power dominates all the other powers. You then have oppression and dictatorship and imperialism. Whereas with Pax Christi, peace made with God through the blood of the cross, is a completely different understanding.

But as things played out in the 2016 election, the Kavanaugh hearings, the Russian collusion case, the Mueller hearings, and more, you can see almost daily in American life and politics the clash between the American Revolution and the French Revolution, the tragedy being there's no Lincoln addressing the better angels.

I'm not American, I'm European. I'm a great admirer of this country. It has done so much for the gospel around the world--for standing for principles like religious freedom--that it would be a tragedy of historic proportions if America turns away from the groundings of true freedom and goes a way that will be a disaster for freedom and humanity in the future.

Riches and Poverty! (J.C. Ryle, "Riches and Poverty!")

Many in every age have disturbed society by stirring up the poor against the rich. But so long as the world is under the present order of things, universal equality cannot be attained.

So long as . . .

some are wise, and some are foolish;
some are strong, and some are weak;
some are healthy, and some are diseased;

so long as children reap the fruit of their parent's misconduct;

so long as sun, and rain, and heat, and cold, and wind, and waves, and drought, and blight, and storm, and tempest are beyond man's control--so long will there be inequality in this world.

Take all the property in England by force this day, and divide it equally among the inhabitants. Give every person over twenty years old an equal portion. Let all share alike, and begin the world over again. Do this, and see where you would be at the end of fifty years. You would just have come round to the point where you began! You would just find things as unequal as before!

Some would have worked--and some would have been lazy;

some would have been always careless--and some always scheming;

some would have sold--and others would have bought;

some would have wasted--and others would have saved.

And the end would be that some would be rich--and others would be poor.

We might as well say . . .

that all people ought to be of the same height, weight, strength, and cleverness;

or that all oak trees ought to be of the same shape and size;

or that all blades of grass ought to be of the same length

--as that all people were meant to be equal.

Settle it in your mind that the main cause of all the suffering you see around you, is sin. Sin is the grand cause . . .

of the enormous luxury of the rich--and the painful degradation of the poor;

of the heartless selfishness of the highest classes--and the helpless poverty of the lowest.

Sin must be first cast out of the world;

the hearts of all people must be renewed and sanctified;

the devil must be bound;

the Prince of Peace must come down and take His great power and reign

--all this must be before there ever can be universal happiness, or the gulf be filled up which now divides the rich and poor.

Beware of expecting a millennium to be brought about . . .
by any method of government,
by any system of education,
or by any political party.

Labor to do good to all men; pity your poorer brethren, and help every reasonable endeavor to raise them from their low estate. Do not slacken your hand from any endeavor . . .

to increase knowledge,
to promote morality,
to improve the temporal condition of the poor.

But never, never forget . . .
that you live in a fallen world,
that sin is all around you,
and that the devil is abroad.

The plague of unsatisfiedness

(Thomas Brooks, "The Crown and Glory of Christianity, or, HOLINESS, the Only Way to Happiness", 1662)

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of **covetousness**; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15

Covetousness is . . .
a very great and grievous sin;
a mother sin;
a breeding sin;
a sin which has all sin in its womb;
a very vile and heinous sin;
the root of all evil.

Covetousness makes the soul *earthly*--which should be *celestial*.

Covetousness is an evil which subjects men to the basest and vilest evils.

Covetousness makes a man a fool! "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Luke 12:20

Covetousness robs a man of all true peace, comfort, contentment and quiet.

Covetousness brings men into *snares* which drown their souls in perdition.

Covetousness renders men **unsatisfied** under all their outward enjoyments. Though a covetous wretch has enough to *sink* him--yet he can never have enough to *satisfy* him. First he wishes for a *bag* full, and then a *chest* full, and then a *room* full, and then a *house* full, etc.

--is the great plague which covetous men are under. Certainly you shall as soon fill a triangle with a circle, and a chest with grace-- as you shall be able to fill and satisfy a covetous mind with money.

A covetous man is like a **swine**--which is good for nothing while it lives.

The *horse* is good to carry,

the *ox* is good to draw,

the *sheep* is good for cloth,

the *cow* is good to give milk,

and the *dog* is good to guard the house--

but the *hog* is good for nothing while he lives!

Just so, a covetous man is only serviceable when he is dead. That scripture often proves true, "the riches of a sinner are laid up for the just." Job 27:17

No sin lays men under greater woes!

"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs!" 1 Timothy 6:9-10

Those who hunt after it are dogs! (Thomas Brooks, "The Crown and Glory of Christianity, or, HOLINESS, the Only Way to Happiness", 1662)

Though of all losses, the loss of the soul is the greatest, the saddest, the sorest, the heaviest, and the most intolerable, inconceivable, and irrecoverable loss--yet a man bewitched with the world will run the hazard of losing his eternal soul, of damning it--to enjoy the world.

Men who are bewitched with this world in these days, oh, how do they prefer their sensual delights, their brutish contentments, and their carnal enjoyments--before the beauties of holiness, and before heavenly glory, where holiness sparkles and shines in all its refulgence, and where their souls might be abundantly satisfied and delighted with . . .

the most ravishing joys,
the most surpassing delights and
the most transcendent pleasures which are at God's
right hand!

The Arabic proverb says that "The world is a carcass--and those who hunt after it are dogs!" If this proverb is true, what a multitude of professors will be found to be dogs . . .

who hunt more after earth--than heaven;
who hunt more after terrestrial things--than celestial things;
who hunt more after worldly nothingnesses and emptinesses --than they do after those fullnesses and sweetnesses which are in God, Christ, Heaven, and holiness!