

God's
Justice, Mercy
and Love

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Sermon Notes:

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Devotional - Day 1

Day 1— God's Mercy

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Psalm 103:8-12 (VOICE):

The Eternal is compassionate and merciful. When we cross all the lines, He is patient with us. When we struggle against Him, He lovingly stays with us—changing, convicting, prodding; He will not constantly criticize; nor will He hold a grudge forever. Thankfully, God does not punish us for our sins and depravity as we deserve. In His mercy, He tempers justice with peace. Measure how high heaven is above the earth; God's wide, loving, kind heart is greater for those who revere Him. You see, God takes all our crimes—our seemingly inexhaustible sins—and removes them. As far as east is from the west, He removes them from us.

Devotional:

“When through the blood of the everlasting covenant we children of the shadows reach at last our home in the light, we shall have a thousand strings to our harps, but the sweetest may well be the one tuned to sound forth most perfectly the mercy of God. For what right have we to be there? Did we not by our sins take part in the unholy rebellion which rashly sought to dethrone the glorious King of Creation? And did we not in times past walk according to the course of this world, according to the evil prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience? And did we not all at once live in the lusts of our flesh? And were not by nature the children of wrath, even as others? But we who were one time enemies and alienated in our minds through wicked works shall then see God face to face and His name shall be on our foreheads. We who earned banishment shall enjoy communion; we who deserve the pains of hell shall know the bliss of heaven. And all through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us.”

A. W. Tozer - *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Question to consider:

Mercy is often described as God not giving us what we deserve, but instead giving us what we don't deserve. What do we deserve and what has God given us instead?

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for your mercy, for not treating me as my sins deserve. Instead You have offered forgiveness and pardon full and free through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Question to Consider:

In *The Knowledge of the Holy*, Tozer poses this question, "Could our failure to capture the pure joy of mercy consciously experienced be the result of our unbelief or our ignorance or both? What might be hindering you from experiencing the joy of His mercy?"

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Devotional - Day 2

Day 2 – God is Just

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Genesis 18:25

“Far be it from you to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Devotional:

“It’s not fair!” I can’t count the times I’ve heard this or said it myself. We as humans have an innate sense of wanting life to be fair. We want justice for the underdog, and we want equality in our rights. So, when life seems unfair, we cry out for relief. Yet, under our desire for justice, we know that the world we live in is not fair, and many times we don’t see justice being served, at least to our satisfaction or in our time frame.

In the midst of an unjust world, Scripture tells us that the God we serve is just. According to the dictionary, this means that He does what is “morally right and fair.” Abraham knew this about God when he cried out to God to not destroy Sodom where his nephew, Lot, lived. He acknowledged God to be “the Judge of all the earth,” and that He does what is right. But, because He is God, He sets the standard of what is right and just. He does not have to adhere to our finite, moral understanding of justice.

Not only does God set the standard for what is right, just, and fair, He lives outside of time and sees everything, past, present, and future, while we live within the constraints of our humanity and time. He knows beyond our capacity what is best and just. This can create tension for us because we don’t see or understand why things happen the way they do, but we are called to trust our Lord, who is not only the God of Justice, but the God of mercy, goodness, and love...even when life is not fair.

Questions to consider:

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being least, 10 being most), how would you rate your level of trust in God when life seems unfair? What would need to happen in order for you to move that number higher on the scale?

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Prayer:

Lord, I acknowledge that You are Lord over all, and all You do is right and just, even when life is unfair. May I learn to trust You more and put my hope in the fact that one day soon You will return and make all things right again. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider:

Zechariah 7:9 – “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.’” In what way can you “administer true justice” in your sphere of influence? Is there a social justice issue that God may be calling you to stand up for?

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Devotional - Day 3

Day 3 - God is Just and Merciful

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Proverbs 28:5 Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.

Devotional:

God's judgment is consistent with love. A God of justice must be a God of love. God's justice balances His love and makes His acts of both justice and love meaningful.

The story of Lot, in the Old Testament (Genesis 18 and 19) is a great example of God's mercy, justice and love. God decided that the town of Sodom, where Lot resided, was so evil that it had to be destroyed. In response to Abraham's request, God sent angel messengers to get his nephew, Lot and his family, out of Sodom before He rained down fire and brimstone on the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot was a good man living in a city of evil people. The angel messengers gave Lot and his family these instructions: Get out of town, run to a safe place, and don't look back. Evidently, they meant every word to be taken literally. Lot and his family fled the city, but when Lot's wife turned to watch the city go up in flames, she was instantly turned into a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters survived the destruction of Sodom, but made some very poor decisions following their escape from God's judgment on the city.

God showed mercy and love to Lot and his daughters while justice was carried out on the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 19:16)

As with everything, God redeemed the horrific story of the evil and sin in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah through a descendant of Lot named Ruth. Lot's oldest daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. (Genesis 19:37) Ruth (from whose lineage Jesus was born) was a Moabite who married an Israelite. That marriage is the subject of the Book of Ruth, which is a beautiful story of redemption, completely unlike the abysmal story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Out of

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

the carnage of a city destroyed, which reveals our desperate need for redemption, our Redeemer emerged.

Questions to consider:

How does the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah confound you? In what ways does this narrative encourage you in your walk with the Lord? How do you feel knowing that God's mercy and justice are work together?

Prayer:

Lord, I acknowledge that You are the God of justice and mercy. Even if/ when I don't understand all your ways, may I place my trust solely in you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider:

2 Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” In what ways do you think God is being “slow” in administering justice? How is His patience merciful? How does this encourage you to be merciful and just?

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Devotional - Day 4

Day 4 - God is Just

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Amos 5:24 But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Devotional:

Devotional: “I can’t believe the police officer gave me a speeding ticket. It was a back road. I was only going 10 miles per hour over. It’s not like it was a school zone. I tried to explain I was late for work but he didn’t care. He was so smug, like he enjoyed writing up my fine. What a jerk.”

We’ve all heard these kinds of comments or have said things like this ourselves. A person breaks the law and then blames the one who caught them for the consequence. If we have this view of God then He is no more than a police officer monitoring a speed trap on a back road somewhere. But, what about the stories of thankfulness due to consequence?

I recently read this article from goodnewsnetwork.org. The article heading read, *“A bit of a rough patch in Tiffany Hall’s life led to an arrest. She didn’t know it at the time, but years later, she’d be so grateful for that turning point in her life, she’d actually invite her arresting officer to her college graduation!”*

Tiffany Hall first met Lieutenant Jim Foster when he was arresting her on drug charges in Long Beach, California. The two had many encounters as Tiffany was spiraling in drug addiction. Every time Lieutenant Foster arrested Tiffany, he’d take her to jail and try to encourage her to leave her current environment and get clean. While Foster was a compassionate police officer, the consequence of the continual arrests led Tiffany to leave her life of addiction and get sober. Then, five years later, Tiffany attributes her turnaround to Lieutenant Foster and even invited him to her graduation where there was quite the emotional reunion.

I believe that the Lord often uses justice to save us from ourselves.

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Consequence can serve as God's nudging to leave a life of destruction and enter into a life of freedom walking with Him. Justice, when administered in love, is simply a picture of hope for a different future. While we may have many questions about God's justice, especially when or how He chooses to administer it, we know this: God is good and He is good all the time. When we must deal with the consequence of our sin, we are given an opportunity to walk in light and freedom with the Lord.

Questions to consider:

What is your perception of God administering justice?

Prayer:

God, your justice and love go hand in hand. It's sometimes hard for me to see this especially when you're administering justice to me. Help me see your justice as love and compassion.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider:

Do you ever wonder why the Lord waits so long to administer His justice to the evil you see in our world?

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Devotional - Day 5

Day 5 - God is Love

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-8 “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Devotional:

“When the Scripture says “God is love” it is not defining God. When it says “God is love” it means that love is an essential attribute of God’s being. It means that God is the summation of all love so that all love comes from God. And it means that God’s love, we might say, conditions all of His other attributes, so that God can do nothing except He does it in love. Love is something true of God but it is not God.” (A.W. Tozer “*The Attributes of God*”)

Love is an attribute of God; a core aspect of His character. God’s love is not in conflict with His holiness, sovereignty, righteousness, justice or even His wrath. Everything God does is loving, just as everything He does is just and right.

“As with all attributes, we can only begin to comprehend God’s love in light of his other attributes. The love of God is eternal, sovereign, unchanging, and infinite.” (R.C Sproul)

“It is a strange and beautiful eccentricity of the free God,” Tozer writes, “that He has allowed His heart to be emotionally identified with men. Self-sufficient as He is, He wants our love and will not be satisfied until He gets it. Free as He is, He has let His heart be bound to us forever. God’s love is active, drawing us to Himself. His love is personal. He doesn’t love humanity in some vague sense, he loves humans. He loves you and me. And His love for us knows no beginning and no end.” (A.W. Tozer “*The Knowledge of the Holy*”)

“Grace teaches us that God loves because of who God is, not because of who we are.” (Philip Yancy)

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

“The totality of God’s love cannot be comprehended by us. It is of such magnitude that we cannot fully understand it with our fallible human minds. But it is a true love that provides the means through belief in Jesus Christ to wash away all our sins, give us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with His guidance and comfort and ends in our eternal existence in heaven.” (Cooper Abrams)

God is love. His love is very different from human love. God’s love is unconditional and it’s not based on feelings or emotions. He doesn’t love us because we’re lovable or because we make Him feel good; He loves us because He is love. He created us to have a loving relationship with Him, and He sacrificed His own Son (who also willingly died for us) to restore that relationship.

Why then, with all this evidence, do so many of us still doubt God’s love? Could it be we are looking at it from our own limited perspective: Since we, as human beings, cannot love others unconditionally, do we doubt that the Lord can love us unconditionally? After all, worldly logic considers it reasonable to share our love with people who measure up to our standards, yet we often avoid those who don’t.

Or maybe we feel unworthy of His love. So let’s be clear, no one is worthy. God’s love is based not on whether we are deserving of His love, but His love is based on His character. We need to understand that love isn’t simply something God does; it’s who He is. (1 John 4:8).

“God’s love is pure. It’s just pure love. It’s lasting and unconditional, not based on what we do or not do. It is eternal. It has always existed.” Charles Stanley

Questions to consider:

How has your perception of God’s love changed or shifted during your lifetime? What does it mean that love is not the definition of God but love is an attribute of God?

Prayer:

God, your love is unimaginably amazing! Show us, through your Word, the meaning of “God is Love”. Open our hearts and eyes to understand

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

Your love. May we rest in Your unconditional and never changing love for us.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider:

How have the good events or sad events in your life influenced your perception of God's love?



Week #8: Justice, Mercy and Love

GOAL:

This week we are studying three attributes of God: His mercy, justice, and love. Mercy is defined as the “compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm,” while love is described as the “intense feeling of deep affection” towards someone or something. Mercy and love seem to go together easily, but then God is also completely just. This means He acts “according to what is morally right and fair.” We often tend to think of God’s love and mercy as being opposite of His justice, and vice versa, but He is equal in all of His character and attributes.

The following excerpt can help us reconcile God’s mercy and love with His justice as we reflect on what Christ has done for us.

Scripture is clear: Christ came to earn our salvation because of God’s love, mercy and justice. God’s love and mercy is affirmed in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” God’s justice is affirmed when Paul writes that God put forward Jesus “as a propitiation” (Romans 3:25), that is, a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath so that God looks favorably toward us. Paul says this was done “to show God’s righteousness “and also “so that he might be just” (Romans 3:25–26). In other words, the sins God “passed over” or didn’t punish before Christ came to earth had to be punished somehow if God was to “be just.” Therefore, someone had to take the punishment for those sins, and that someone was Jesus. In Jesus’ life and death, we find a full expression of God’s justice (sin is punished), love and mercy (God gave his own Son to bear the punishment for our sins). - *Excerpt From: Wayne A. Grudem & Elliot Grudem. “Christian Beliefs.” iBooks. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/christian-beliefs/id387709973?mt=11>*

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

May this week's study of God's mercy, justice, and love help us come to a better understanding of how these attributes perfectly coexist in God's character, and how we are also called to reflect these aspects of His character in our own daily lives.

LOVING GOD:

- * Memory Verse: Micah 6:8: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."
- * 2 minutes of silence
- * Devotional: choose one of the 5 devotionals for this week on the Mercy, Justice and Love of God to read aloud to the group.
- * Question to Consider: this will come from the devotional as well
- * 2 minutes of silence

BUILDING COMMUNITY:

* **Growing Connected Questions:**

- Do you tend to see God more as the God of mercy, God of love, or God of justice?
- What is the danger of having a one-dimensional view of God (i.e. only as merciful, or only as just)?
- How would you respond to someone who professes to be a Christian but says, "I believe in a God of love and mercy, but not a God of judgment"?
- What stood out to you from this past week's message?

MAKING DISCIPLES:

* Bible Study Scriptures:

Read the following Scriptures out loud in the group: **Micah 6:8;**
Romans 5:6-11

* Questions:

- Read **Micah 6:8**. What does the Lord require of us? How can we act justly in our day-to-day lives? In what ways can we show we love mercy? How can we nurture humility in our lives as we walk with God? Who in your life needs to experience love from you most right now? How about mercy? Justice?
- Read **Romans 5:6-11**. How do these verses show us God's love? His mercy? His justice? How did God reconcile His demand for justice with His mercy and love?

God's Justice, Mercy and Love

* Application questions:

- How does my understanding of God being a God of mercy, love and justice affect my relationship with Him?
- If I truly understand and believe this about God, how will it affect the way I live?
- What is God saying to me? What am I going to do about it?

* Daily Devotionals:

-Read the daily devotions for Week #8 “Mercy, Justice and Love.”

*Going Deeper (The following are added optional resources for you to help you grow in your understanding of this week’s attribute(s) of God):

1 - If you want to take the challenge, get a copy of A. W. Tozer’s *The Knowledge of the Holy*, and read chapters 17,18 & 20.

2 – Quotes to consider: “The sinful condition of mankind presents us with a dilemma: How can a holy, righteous God forgive our sins? If He deals with us only on the basis of His justice, every human being would suffer the eternal punishment of His wrath, which their sins deserve. But if He extends mercy instead of justice, no one would pay the penalty for sin, and God would then cease to be just.

There was only one way the Lord could stay true to His nature and at the same time forgive our sins. The solution was to satisfy His justice by pouring out His wrath on a substitute. The penalty for sin would be paid, and He would be free to extend mercy to sinners.

This is the only plan that accommodates both aspects of His divine nature. So Christ came as our substitute; He took the punishment for our sin, enabling us to experience the Father’s mercy. Now, by placing faith in Jesus, anyone can be justified, that is, declared legally righteous.” Charles Stanley

“We must always look at the cross on the dark background of judgment. It was because God’s love for man was so intense that He gave His Son, so that man would not have to face judgment.”

Billy Graham

3 – Article on God’s Love, Mercy, and Justice <https://www.bibleinoneyear.org/bioy/commentary/94>

4 – Books on God’s love – Surrender to Love by David Benner
He Loves Me by Wayne Jacobsen

Prayer Requests