

WHO IS A GOD LIKE YOU?

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Justice involves retribution – God rightly punishes wrongdoing and evil




- ❓ The idea of justice as a principle that ensures that those who are accused of wrongdoing are judged fairly and, if found guilty, receive what they deserve is thoroughly biblical

We cannot talk about biblical justice unless we also talk about mercy

He hath shewn thee, O man
What is good for thee.
And what doth the Lord
Require of thee
But to do justly
And to love mercy
And to walk humbly with thy God.





“Who is a God like you ... ? ... You do not stay angry for ever, but delight to show mercy” (Micah 7:18)

- ❑ For Micah, as for other Old Testament prophets, God was a God of both justice and mercy.
- ❑ We can't really talk about biblical justice unless we also talk about mercy ... and both are intimately part of what it means to live as God wants us to live.



The Hebrew word for justice – *mishpat* – includes actively seeking restoration

- ❑ **Jeremiah 22:3:** “This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.”
- ❑ **Isaiah 1:16-17:** “Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”

James 1:22-27

**Be doers of
the Word,
not just
hearers.**

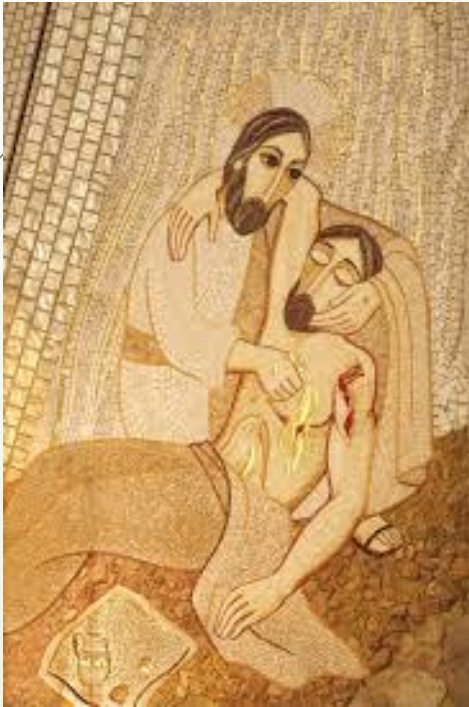
❓ “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do ... Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Bob and Bibi Moles

Bob and Bibi
have been
deeply involved
in overturning
miscarriages of
justice here in
Australia



The Hebrew word for mercy – *hesed* – speaks of compassionate kindness, another ‘action’ word



❓ In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus was not only teaching the lawyer – and us – about the true meaning of compassion and mercy ... he was also *addressing the deep injustice* suffered by the man in the parable.



Putting right what is wrong

- ❓ This putting right what is wrong is something that operates at the level of *individual need through acts of mercy* (fully restoring the beaten man) and *at a more structural level* as unjust systems of oppression and the denial of human rights are overcome.

God's ultimate word to all people is not justice, but grace

- ❓ Was it 'just' for the father to receive back his prodigal son, and on top of that to throw a party for him after he had squandered half his inheritance?
- ❓ Perhaps we need to rethink our understanding of justice, which has more to do with *generosity* than with our notions of fairness.





Justice and mercy are two sides of the same coin – the coin of love

- ❓ When we live out the redemptive power of love – doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God – then perhaps, as a congregation called to enact God's justice, we will begin to discover that God's love in us shapes the very content of justice in our midst.

When love is the way

- ❓ Bishop Michael Curry preaching at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle in 2018

