

GENEROUS JUSTICE.... THAT'S WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT!

**IS 11: 1-5**

***1 Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot -- yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. 2 And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will never judge by appearance, false evidence, or hearsay. 4 He will defend the poor and the exploited. He will rule against the wicked and destroy them with the breath of his mouth. 5 He will be clothed with fairness and truth.***

In our church we have often spoken about JUSTICE. Social justice. We're intentional about the fact that we want to make a difference on the community in which we live. That we help you as congregants to understand that the world is really not a just and fair place. That somebody needs to stand up and say something and more importantly- do something.

The word JUSTICE, means fairness, impartial, honest, and even-handed. Don't make more of some and less of others. The opposite of Justice is INJUSTICE.

We've read and are familiar with many stories of great people that became famous for their fight against INJUSTICE. Many movies have been made about these heroes and heroines. Wilberforce, for example [Amazing Grace] spoke out against the slave trade; Martin Luther [Luther] spoke out against the oppression of the church against ordinary people. Martin Luther King spoke out against segregation in the USA. It is still said that 10h00 on a Sunday morning is the most divided hour in America. Blacks go to Black churches; whites go to white churches etc.

Bishop Festo Kivengere, an Anglican Bishop in Uganda, during the reign of the mad-man Idi Amin, wrote a book called; "I love Idi Amin". Idi Amin was responsible for killing thousands of people in Uganda. Especially those who were not Moslem. Now, before you misconstrue what I'm saying about Idi Amin, let me explain.... It was equally evil what the Crusaders did when they ravaged the known world under the banner of the cross. Just as it was equally evil what Vervoerd and his ilk did with their draconian, segregationists policies called APARTHEID.

Festo Kivengere understood God's grace and mercy, he realised that Idi needed a Saviour just as everybody else did. In the book there is a sentence that reads; 'THE GROUND IS LEVEL AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS!'

BIBLICAL JUSTICE speaks of equity from God's point of view. Those economies of scale are rather different and even those of our number who would rate themselves as 'hard-core' Christians would have a real challenge to measure up. Because it speaks about; 'turn the

other cheek; walk an extra mile with the backpack of a hated Roman on your back; you wronged me, I forgive you....' So when Festo said I love Idi, he was exercising Biblical Justice.

When we experience the wholeness that Jesus offers, we can carry this JUSTICE to the world.

JAMES 2:

***1 My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim that you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favour some people more than others? 2 For instance, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewellery, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in shabby clothes. 3 If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor" -- well, 4 doesn't this discrimination show that you are guided by wrong motives? 5 Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? 6 And yet, you insult the poor man! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? 7 Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear? 8 Yes indeed, it is good when you truly obey our Lord's royal command found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbour as yourself."***

In James 2:1-5, he calls for a breaking down of these divisions. He, like Jesus felt that all people should be treated the same. Rich, good-looking, well-connected people shouldn't get preferential treatment. All are equal in the eyes of pa God

Look at what Jesus says in Matt 23: 23 ***"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you ignore the important things of the law -- justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things.***

You see, it's rather uncomfortable to speak about justice and mercy. Sometimes it's easier to speak about faith in a controlled environment. History is littered with stories of those who were brave enough to say something about injustice. Jesus was bringing to the religious leaders' attention, that it's important to keep the law. Pay the tithes but it's equally important to speak against injustice. Even though it will cost you.

When speak about a GENEROUS JUSTICE ....we assume the responsibility of doing something about....

Tim Keller has strong words for people who do not care about the poor: "All I know is, if I don't care about the poor, if my church doesn't care about the poor, that's evil." The

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There cannot be any form of justice- biblical, social or even generous justice without the individual being transformed by the power of God. And when the individual is transformed the community will be transformed.

When people say things like; “Where is the church? Why isn’t the church doing anything about this or that??” I’d like to ask, “Where are you? Why aren’t you doing anything about what you see and think ought to be done?” You see, before it becomes a church community’s responsibility, it is an individual’s responsibility.

Generosity means; to be big-hearted, open-handed, and liberal. The opposite is miserliness, meanness. Conservatism is an off-shoot of miserliness. Unfortunately it would appear that religious conservative folk are stingy with their time, their money and their kindness. And the only people that benefit from their wealth are those close to them.

I’m so glad for **Jn 3:16**... God so loved the world. The whole KOSMOS... includes the Gentile nations. Every single human being is included here.

**Rom 5:8**... While we were yet sinners, He died for us. He didn’t wait for us to change and become better people. NO! While were down and out, stinking, HE did it for us... You and I included. To such an extent that He gave His one and only SON... you see when we love, we give. When we’re touched by God and Christmas something shifts in us. We see what He sees, does what he does, go where He goes or says to us to go.

So when we speak about tithes and offerings, we mostly speak about being generous with what God has given us. We must pay attention to the law, but more than that, we must be generous...

Jesus came to be a spokesman for the poor, as our key text says. So, Christmas is a time to renew our understanding of what He came to do.

***ZOLANI MBANGA.... invite him and Monica to join me on stage.***

***He will be going to CT study at a Maths and Science Academy – Chrysallis- in Constantia.***

***He has no parents – never met his father. His mother passed away. Teachers at the school have jumped in to help. We’ve been approached to assist...***

***You ask how can you make a difference? You ask where is the church in peoples suffering? Well, here it is... you and I have an opportunity to add value to this young life.***

Go back to our text...

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