

BOOK OF FAITH SERIES: TOP 10 STORIES & THEMES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT  
WEEK 7: (Beginning Sunday, November 1, 2009): "Doing Justice -- God's Dream for the World"

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READINGS FOR THE WEEK...

Micah 6:1-8

Amos 5:21-24

Luke 4:14-21

Luke 10:25-37

NOTE ON READINGS...

Jesus picked up the yoke (teachings) of Israel's prophets as his own. Like John the Baptizer, he called God's Partner People to be faithful to the covenant God had always had with them, and held God's Partner People accountable to the Dream of God for them and for the world: Justice & Righteousness (Fairness for all, and Right Living through loving relationships - with God, others and creation). The Amos and Micah readings cite a primary concern for almost all of Israel's prophets: "No matter how beautifully or majestically or properly you worship God, it means nothing to God if you neglect the poor, the lonely, the oppressed and the forgotten." Most of the prophets railed against God's People, and predicted their downfall, because they were neglecting the widows and the orphans among them, they were excluding the handicapped and the poor, and they were contributing to the imbalance of wealth while the gap between rich and poor grew wider. In short, the act of worship only pleases God if God's people are simultaneously living worshipful lives by loving God and loving neighbor (and God's creation) 24-7.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY...

+ Sometimes we hear people talk about "justice being done" but what they really mean is "getting revenge" for something done wrong to them. How is God's Justice different from this understanding of justice? The bible word for justice, both in the New and Old Testament is more akin to "fairness" and it has to do with pro-active living. We are to live with others according to God's fairness, considering the well-being of everyone as equals. How do you share God's Dream of Fairness with the world?

+ In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10, noted above in readings), Jesus told a Jewish audience about a Jewish man getting beat up, robbed and left for dead by fellow Jews. A Jewish priest and a Jewish scholar both ignore the man and pass by without any sense of care. But a Samaritan (the sworn blood enemies of the Jews, mutually hated by one another) is the hero of this story, the one who stops to help the man, dresses his wounds, carries him to an inn, and leaves money for his care. How might you be offended by this story if you were Jewish and listening to Jesus? Who are your "Samaritans" in your world - the people you view as your sworn and hated enemies? What would it take for you to give that kind of person help and how hard would that be? What would it take for you to receive help from that kind of person, and how hard would it be? What might you learn from receiving this kind of help from someone you hated?

+ The prophet Micah reminds us that real, true worship is "Doing Justice, Loving Kindness, and Walking Humbly with God." What evidence of "real, true worship" do you see and hear in our corporate worship together on Sundays? When you come to worship on Sundays, do you ever think about the connection to serving God during the rest of the week? If not, what difference might that make?

+ How are we, together, and how am I, individually, "doing justice"... and ... "loving kindness" ... and ... "walking humbly with God" ?

A STORY FROM AN FLC DISCIPLE ABOUT SHARING GOD'S DREAM WITH THE WORLD IN A SIMPLE WAY... (a.k.a. "Love Wins")

I was driving toward Greensboro on I-40 near Chapel Hill after a personal retreat to listen to God and discern God's direction for my life. I looked behind me and noticed a NC State Trooper's car hot on the back of my bumper. The odd thing was that people were flying by me and I was not speeding. He stayed there for about 5 minutes while several speeders passed by me. Then it happened. He turned on the blue lights and I pulled over. A large scary looking trooper emerged from his car and started walking toward my window. I already had my license out as he said, "Ma'am, the reason I pulled you over is because your inspection sticker on the back of your car is 12 days expired. Can I have your driver's license please?"

I handed it to him and he walked back to his car and sat down. I noticed after a few minutes he got out with only my driver's license in his hand and approached my window again. He said, "Ma'am, you have an impeccable record with no offenses since you received your driver's license in 1980. I am not going to tarnish your record with a citation for this. Just drive carefully and make sure to have your car inspected when you get home."

Then he paused, and I saw a hint of a smile on his face when he said, "Oh, and by the way, thanks for the reminder on the bumper of your car - Love Does Win." I pulled off and immediately realized that evangelism had happened for a state trooper on the interstate today. I didn't know his name or his level of spirituality, but that made no difference. I knew he had been touched by the bumper sticker I got from Rob Bell's website that says: "LOVE WINS."

You never know whose life you will touch and in what way. He did not read it or hear it inside the walls of a church today. I don't know if he even goes to church. But I do know that these simple words I display on the back of my car made a positive difference in someone's life today - and a state trooper at that. It may have been just what he needed to regain perspective and re-connect with God.

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REMINDER: Sermons, some in print form, and all in audio format, are available on the FLC website:

[www.firstlutheran.com](http://www.firstlutheran.com)

REMINDER: "Take It Home" activities and discussion guides for families with children are available on the FLC website, Children's Ministry page

COMING NEXT SUNDAY, November 8... "By the Rivers of Babylon -- When God Seems Absent"

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Blessings to you as we journey together,

Pastors Jay & Charlie