

Voices: Justice looks like hope, not hopelessness

October 7, 2020

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Justice looks like ..." is a special series in the Voices column. Readers will have the opportunity to consider justice from numerous viewpoints. The series is based on each writer's understanding of Scripture and relationship with Jesus Christ. Writers present their own views independent of any institution, unless otherwise noted in their bios.

You are encouraged to listen to each writer without prejudgment. Then, engage in conversation with others around you about what justice looks like to you.

[Click here](#) for more information about the series. [Click here](#) to read the full "Justice looks like..." series.

Many of us have contemplated justice more in 2020 than we have perhaps in our entire lives. In these days of pandemic, striving for racial equality and economic ruination, we are asking ourselves questions about justice and what constitutes justice. These are questions we should have asked long before now.

What is fair? What is valid? What is peace? What is genuine respect for others? What is right? What is wholeness? What is hope? What is justice?

Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, stated: "I think hopelessness is the enemy of justice. I think injustice prevails where hopelessness persists."

What hopelessness looks like

Bombs fall each day, and the older sister wonders if her siblings will come home that day from school. One by one, they leave their country, not knowing where they will go. Hopelessness.

The oppressive government strangled individual rights; so, he spoke up. He was imprisoned. Hopelessness.

A gang showed up at her door and threatened to kill her entire family if they were not out of their house by the next day. They left. Hopelessness.

They live on about a dollar a day. When pandemic crippled the economy, the absence of resources was immediate. Whole communities unable to feed their families. Hopelessness.

She has a Ph.D. from an American university. Yet, she fears going to purchase a movie ticket from the ticket booth because of how she is treated when she speaks with an accent. Hopelessness.

She was sexually abused as a child. At age 15, she did not think she was worthy of anything other than selling herself. There were those who preyed on that vulnerability. Her loss was their gain. Hopelessness.

He is willing to work and work hard. He wants to feed his family. Others capitalize on his desperation by forcing him to labor in their restaurants. Hopelessness.

Hope involves us

In Mark 2, we read of the paralyzed man. He was brought to Jesus for healing. The friends in this account sought wholeness, hope, peace, fairness and more for their friend. We find here actions we can imitate so

we, too, can be instruments of justice.

In verse 3 we read, “Some people arrived, and four of them were bringing to him a man who was paralyzed.”

“Some people.” Only four were carrying him, but there were more than these four who sought what was right and fair for the paralyzed man.

It will take our collective action and our collective commitment for justice to prevail. The paralyzed man could not seek wholeness for himself. It took not one, two, three or four, but *some* people.

A pastor friend of mine recently pointed out there are no gender designations here. People brought him to Jesus.

What compelled these people to bring this man to a crowded room? What was their planning? What were their hopes?

We are the hands, feet and mouths of justice for those who are “paralyzed.” Too many are not able to seek justice. We seek it for them.

This group worked together to help the paralyzed man have the opportunity for wholeness. We must do it together in harmony and unity. Hope, not hopelessness.

Hope involves access

In verse 4 we read, “They couldn’t carry him through the crowd, so they tore off part of the roof above where Jesus was.”

Access is life. Whether it is racial equality, economic stability, health care, gender or age vulnerability, education, safe drinking water, peaceful communities—without access, change cannot occur.

This is one of the most obvious disparities of the recent months—those who

have access and those who do not.

Not everyone has had access to health, equality or protection from economic ruin. As each of us experience these turbulent times, we have been forced to realize fragility is no respecter of persons.

Stability, strength and healing come with access to systems of justice. These friends knew the paralyzed man needed to get to Jesus. They had to think creatively and make some very bold moves.

It was bold to think they could get the man there. It was bold to think they could get him up on the roof. It was extremely bold to cut a hole in the roof. It was bold to lower the man in front of Jesus, demanding Jesus give this man the attention they knew he deserved. Hope, not hopelessness.

Hope involves faith

Verse 5 says Jesus saw their faith. He saw the faith of the friends and said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven."

Grace and mercy were extended to the one paralyzed, because the friends had faith. Faith their friend would experience justice and wholeness. Faith Jesus would act. Faith that healing would occur.

They had the kind of faith that picks up the one unable and goes above and beyond to see access is gained. Hope, not hopelessness.

What does justice look like? It looks like hope.

How are we to counter the hopelessness that is the enemy of justice? By working together in harmony and unity, by acting creatively with boldness and with faith justice will occur.

Rev. Nell Green has served as a career missionary since 1986 in Dakar,

Senegal; Miami; North and South Carolina; and Brussels, Belgium. Currently serving with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Houston, Green ministers to the needs of refugees, helping them resettle and providing educational programs and social entrepreneurship. She partners with various agencies to raise awareness about and prevent human trafficking. The views expressed are those solely of the author.

[Click here](#) to read the full “Justice looks like...” series.