

Voices: Justice looks like putting out the fire

April 26, 2021

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.

What if your neighbor's house was on fire? After calling 911, hearing the sirens blaring louder, coming closer, suddenly to your horror, they stop at the beginning of your block and commence spraying every house instead of the house on fire.

How would you feel regarding such disregard? Disappointed? Marginalized? Horrified? These are putting it mildly. What if the fire department answered your urgent concern with the tepid response that they wanted to equalize resources with other houses?

This scenario is being played out across the country. Peaceful protesters are voicing deep frustration for the high number of Black lives that have been lost due to injustice. There have been too many indications of a

system that has gone badly wrong.

A plethora of injustices against people of color dominate the news weekly. What will it take to awaken a sense of urgency to the evils of systemic racism?

“Black Lives Matter” reached accelerated crescendos of “fortissimo” decibels during last summer. People are urgently crying out for social justice now. They are marching with megaphones while speaking truth to power: “Enough is enough!” “We’re sick and tired of being sick and tired!”

The situation is desperate. It is an emergency. The house is on fire!

The Bible’s view of justice

What does justice look like? It looks like *imago Dei*—all people created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

Justice is an attribute of God. God is a God of justice. “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne”(Psalm 97:2).

The Bible is replete with references of how people of God must be just and fair in all our dealings with other people made in God’s image.

Notice: Justice calls for action according to a psalm of Asaph: “Provide justice for the needy and the fatherless; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. Rescue the poor and needy; save them from the power of the wicked” (Psalm 82:3-4).

Where is the church?

So, where is the church? The church cannot be silent while African Americans and other people of color are demanding justice in the face of

systemic racism.

The church represents Jesus Christ in the world. Our mission is that of reconciling the world to Christ. We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20).

It is very dismissive of the church to see injustices and respond with callous complacency that "all lives matter." Yes, they do, but *our* house is on fire.

We are compassionate Christ-followers. The world is watching our reaction. Action is needed individually and collectively. "Who knows? Perhaps, you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14b).

The late 20th century theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, stated: "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

The prolific 20th century theologian, C.S. Lewis, stated, "One of the most cowardly things ordinary people do is to shut their eyes to the facts."

Seeing value and worth in all people

Justice looks like people who see value and worth in all people. Justice does something about a system that victimizes innocent victims.

Social justice takes Christ's words seriously in relieving the atrocities hurting "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40).

Mother Teresa was asked once how she served in such desperate conditions in Calcutta? Her answer: "I see the face of Jesus in every child."

Friends, that is what justice looks like. We must see Jesus in every face. Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and too many others have been silenced unjustly. Their lives mattered.

Reform is demanded to fix a broken system. What about the sanctity of life?

Remember the late U.S. Rep. John Robert Lewis' impassioned query that awakens our immediate action: "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?"

The Declaration of Independence proclaims, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that, *all men are created equal*." The fact is, Black Lives Matter is not about special treatment, but equal justice.

Realize your potential in this urgent matter. The next house that's on fire could be yours. What would you want others to do?

Jesus' command—what we call the Golden Rule—is: "Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them" (Matthew 7:12).

What does justice look like to you?

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