

Voices: Justice looks like shalom for my neighbor

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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.

August 2017 was a month I experienced like no other before. I was standing in the Fort Worth City Council meeting, where hundreds of citizens came together to ask the city to join a lawsuit against SB4—a "show me your papers" law passed in Texas.

We did not win the votes necessary. Nonetheless, I saw lived out that day the arduous work of justice for our neighbors.

In that auditorium were people of diverse ethnicities, races, faiths and socioeconomic backgrounds. The majority were not immigrants, and many had no direct family members who were immigrants. You would think they had no personal motive to be there. The law did not affect them personally, since it did not infringe on any of their rights or privileges.

The room was filled with Latinos, African Americans, Jews, Muslims, white people, Catholics, Christians, affluent and vulnerable people, immigrants, students, professors, professionals and leaders of many fields. All of them were advocating together on behalf of our undocumented immigrant neighbors.

We did so, because we wanted our neighbors to be restored, made whole, reconciled, complete. In other words, we want them to experience the shalom of God.

I remember one Black neighbor that day who said he stood with the undocumented community, because they were his neighbors, and he hoped one day the immigrant community also would stand with and for him.

That day, I witnessed a glimpse of hope for our neighbors.

What shalom looks like

Lisa Sharon Harper says it so well in her book *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right*:

“Shalom is what God declared. Shalom is what the Kingdom of God looks like. Shalom is when all people have enough. It’s when families are healed. It’s when churches, schools, and public policies protect human dignity. Shalom is when the image of God is recognized in every single human. Shalom is our calling as followers of Jesus’ gospel. It is the vision God set forth in the Garden and the restoration God desires for every relationship.”

Shalom is to be made whole. When we see our neighbors are in need, suffering or facing injustices, we have compassion, and then we act on empathy by seeking the shalom they need to be made complete.

Shalom in Jesus' ministry

As I look to Jesus' ministry, I continually see his desire for shalom in the lives of those who have been oppressed and marginalized and who are vulnerable.

We have the story of the woman who hemorrhaged for 12 years. Jesus stops to heal her while on his way to heal the daughter of a powerful, influential and religious man. The daughter dies while Jesus stops to ask who touched him. He offers the woman shalom, restores her health and reconciles her to her community and himself.

In another story, Jesus goes out of his way to bring wholeness—shalom—to a Samaritan woman who feels abandoned, abused and insufficient. Jesus offers safety, permanence and restoration. Then she goes back to the same community that shunned and abused her and extends the good news of Jesus to them, sharing the shalom of Christ with them.

Jesus intercedes for the life of a woman who is about to be stoned to death, calling out the powerful oppressors in her life and their unjust religious interpretation of the law. He acts on justice and sets her free, extending shalom.

Jesus tells the Jewish leaders the story of a Samaritan man who he declares is a good neighbor, because he shared shalom with someone he did not know.

We can extend shalom

Justice looks like extending shalom to my neighbor. Followers of Christ are called to the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of shalom or justice. Each of us is called to seek the wholeness, safety, permanency, completeness and restoration of our neighbors.

It's the body of Christ recognizing our Black neighbors' lives matter and calling on our communities and leaders to amend our laws and police practices that burden our neighbors.

Extending shalom is the church living by Mathew 25 and offering a place of safety and permanence to immigrants and refugees who seek a new home, because we believe in the sanctity of life for people, whether they are born in our country or in other countries.

Justice will require us to listen, empathize and sacrifice time, money, resources and comfort so others who do not profit from the same privileges as we do also can have access to privileges like equitable education and health.

Justice begins by lending the microphone and giving voice to the marginalized, poor and vulnerable to share their narratives and be empowered to lead in the restoration of justice in their communities.

Three years ago, justice was not served as I wanted it to be, but I saw a community—many of whom I had just met for the first time—advocating for the shalom of our immigrant community. It brought hope to my community that many who may not look like us or have similar stories are working to extend shalom actively to neighbors they do not know.

How are you extending shalom to your neighbors?

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