

# Voices: Justice looks like tearing down the wall between you and Christ

October 26, 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.*

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I was born, raised and now live in El Paso. El Paso is a great place to live if you like to run, and I do. My runs regularly take me up to a place where I can see all three cities and states that adjoin each other here.

A few weeks ago, while on a morning run on my usual route, I noticed two things at a distance I hadn't realized could be seen from my vantage point.



(Photo courtesy of Bethany Molinar)

To the left of my viewpoint was a thick black line in stark contrast to the natural colors of the desert landscape. This is a part of the border wall funded by private donations.

Directly across and above this wall is Mount Cristo Rey, which sits on both sides of the international border between the United States and Mexico. The mountain is named for the statue of Christ located at the top of the mountain.

The figure of Christ stands in front of a giant cross. His eyes gaze out over the borderland, and his arms are outstretched with his palms facing outward over three cities and two nations.

As I thought about this picture—a manmade barrier created to keep people out directly across from a statue of Jesus on Mount Cristo Rey—Christ’s words came to my mind: “For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in. ... Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me” (Matthew 25:42-43, 45).

# **Caring for Christ at our border**

Over the past few years, our city has been center stage to a humanitarian crisis. We have had front row seats as thousands of asylum seekers have traveled north to seek refuge at our border.

Our brothers and sisters seeking asylum shared with us their stories of what pushed them out of their beloved homelands and stories of the perilous journey that led them to our churches and nonprofits. Their journeys were fraught with danger on their way to the United States.

They also told of the harsh conditions they faced at the hands of federal agents and facilities after they surrendered themselves at our border.

Christ himself arrived at our doors. Churches, nonprofit organizations and individuals in our city responded to his knocking by working together to provide these brothers and sisters with shelter—a place to rest and catch their breath before waiting for their court hearings.

We gave them a clean set of clothes. We fed them. We prayed with them, and they prayed over us. Through this experience, we were ministered to in sanctifying, paradigm-shifting ways through the binding of the Holy Spirit between us and our brothers and sisters.

Christ came to our border. It was tough work. We were stretched thin. But we were motivated by a holy calling to love our neighbors as ourselves.

# **Caring for our brothers and sisters**

When the “Remain in Mexico” policy was enacted, Christ was barred from crossing the border as thousands of asylum seekers were forced to wait for their court hearings for several months in Mexico.

Our brothers and sisters in Mexico responded by opening their doors to their neighbors seeking asylum. They fed them. They clothed them. They gave them shelter. And they continue to minister to many who have nowhere else to turn.

These ministers of Christ are stretched thin. They have become vulnerable to danger from gangs who do not want these churches to provide refuge to asylum seekers. But they still serve, sharing what little resources they may have, because they are compelled by their faith to love their neighbor as themselves—to love and serve Christ who has come knocking at their door.

## **Walling Christ out**

Through a concerted effort by our government, a wall has been placed between us and our brothers and sisters seeking asylum. This wall is physical, but it also is legal, spiritual, emotional.

Our brothers and sisters are returned—by the plane load and in the dead of night—to their home countries where they face certain danger. They have been kept in subhuman conditions and incarcerated for indefinite amounts of time while awaiting their fate.

Their children have been ripped from their arms, scarred and traumatized by the separation of their primary source of comfort and refuge. They have been denied the universally recognized human right of seeking asylum.

When you create a divide that prevents people from seeking refuge—be it through a literal, physical wall or policy or by choosing consciously to do nothing in response to the cries of your brothers and sisters—you also put up a wall between you and Christ.

Your justification for that divide may be fear, a love of country over and above Christ's command to love your neighbor as yourself, ignorance or

racism. But still, the wall remains, and you separate yourself from Christ.

“Whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me,” Jesus said. “Depart from me” (Matthew 25:41, 45).

## Letting Christ in

But Christ—whose ways are higher and holier than any manmade barrier—stands atop the holy mountain. His eyes are gazing outward toward you beyond the wall you’ve built between you and him. His hands are reaching outward, ready to reconcile you to him. But you have to tear down that wall.

Take heart; have courage. Trust and obey God, and tear down the oppressive manmade structures—be they physical barriers or policies that keep out those who are vulnerable.

Until you do, you wall out Christ.

“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

*Bethany Rivera Molinar serves as the executive director of Ciudad Nueva Community Outreach, is the president of the Texas Christian Community Development Network and co-pastors a church that meets in her neighborhood park. She lives, works and worships in her downtown neighborhood in El Paso, with her husband Adrian and their three children. The views expressed are those solely of the author.*

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