

Voices: Justice looks like what Scripture tells us

September 6, 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 prejudice. 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.

Scripture tells us what justice looks like.

Justice looks like:

- Water flowing down (Amos 5).
- An ear inclined toward the orphan and the oppressed (Psalm 10).
- No wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan or the widow (Jeremiah 22).
- Food to the hungry (Psalm 149).
- Stability in the land (Proverbs 29).
- Doing good, rescuing the oppressed, defending the orphan and pleading for the widow (Isaiah 1).
- Delivery from the hand of the oppressor by anyone who has been robbed (Jeremiah 21).

- Joy to the righteous, but dismay to evil doers (Proverbs 29).
- What we're required to do (Micah 6).
- Zacchaeus paying back four times what he stole from others (Luke 19).
- Doing unto "the least of these" as we would do unto Christ himself (Matthew 25).
- Loving your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus, Mark, Matthew, Luke, Romans, Galatians, James).

These powerful images should be formative. They should shape not only our personal morality, but also our public engagement. How might we exercise a Christian citizenship that promotes and fulfills this biblical view of justice?

Justice vs. injustice

Justice looks like hospitality and welcoming the stranger. Injustice looks like separating families, rejecting asylum seekers, refusing refugees and locking kids in cages. Injustice allows forces of white Christian nationalism to influence policy.

Justice looks like fairness. Injustice looks like record low interest rates for the wealthy while the financially vulnerable and desperate are charged [more than 400 percent APR on payday and auto title loans](#).

Justice looks like generosity. Injustice looks like [1 in 3 households with children unable to afford food, housing or utilities at least once from 2014 to 2016](#).

Justice looks like daily bread. Injustice looks like [hunger rates for Black and Latino families twice that of white families](#).

Justice looks like equality. [Injustice looks like the top three richest Americans owning more wealth than the bottom half of all Americans](#).

Injustice looks like [the typical white family owning nearly 10 times the wealth of a typical Black family.](#)

Justice looks like opportunity. Injustice looks like [overwhelmingly white school districts receiving \\$23 billion more in state and local funding than predominantly nonwhite schools serving the same number of students, and Black students attending schools just as segregated now as in the 1960s and '70s.](#)

Justice looks like freedom. Injustice looks like mass incarceration where the [United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world](#) and where [Black Americans are incarcerated at a rate more than five times higher than whites.](#) Injustice looks like a bail system where [the poor remain in jail before they're ever convicted of a crime just because they are poor.](#)

Justice looks like a sustainable relationship with God's creation and natural resources. Injustice looks like [those least responsible for carbon dioxide emissions being most impacted by climate change.](#)

Justice looks like a functional democracy that affirms the equality and God-given dignity of every voter. Injustice looks like restricting access to the ballot by reduced early voting, improper purges of electoral rolls, closing polling places, voters waiting in line all day to cast a ballot and [6.1 million Americans barred from voting due to felony disenfranchisement.](#) Injustice looks like political districts so gerrymandered they reduce the influence of communities and ensure reelection of incumbents.

Justice looks like a country where the likelihood of a family thriving cannot be predicted by the color of their skin. Injustice looks like health care systems that repeatedly fail our Black and Latino neighbors, including [infant](#) and [maternal](#) mortality rates, [death from diabetes](#) and [rates of uninsured.](#)

Justice looks like empathy. Injustice refuses to see from another's

perspective, to acknowledge their experience is different from ours, or to believe their testimony.

Seeing and seeking justice

Justice looks like striving to live up to our American ideal that all are created equal. Justice looks like those doing well themselves working for a better future for neighbors who struggle.

We cannot see justice when we are motivated by anger and fear. To see justice, we must raise our gaze above the partisanship and cynicism that limits our vision. We cannot see justice with a scarcity mindset, that refuses to embrace God's abundance. To see justice, we must engage our prophetic imagination that envisions God's kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

Justice cannot prevail when we perpetuate unjust systems, because they protect our own power and privilege. Justice cannot be the goal of only one political party or one "type" of Christian.

If we're going to achieve liberty and justice for all, it will take us all. Every American, and certainly every follower of Christ, should be committed to seeking justice; it's what we're called to do. Justice looks like the promise of equality finally fulfilled, instead of a dream too long deferred.

Stephen Reeves serves as executive director of Fellowship Southwest and as director of advocacy for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. A native of Austin, he is the former director of public policy for the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, is a member of the State Bar of Texas and a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and Texas Tech School of Law.

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