

# Voices: Living God's kingdom justice where you are

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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.*

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Last summer, I taught the course Ministering in the Latino Context, which covers many aspects of Latino culture and its implications in ministry.

Among the class, there were four Black students. I learned from listening to their stories that many of the social and racial injustices Latinos suffer in this country have similar tenors with other minorities' experiences, not only in the African American context, but also in all the subcultures of this nation.

## Imperfect and perfect justice

Indeed, the drums of social and racial discrimination have been beating louder in the heart of American society in recent days. The truth is we

always will be looking to improve our system of justice, and this will be an unending journey.

Recent events that have ignited the social and racial agendas are ample evidence that our concept of social justice is far from perfect. Clearly, it is an incomplete, adulterated and imperfect human system.

The different manifestations and expressions of unconformity about social racism reveal only the tip of the iceberg, the reality of which communicates a desperate need to get closer to racial reconciliation in different parts of the world.

At the same time, we must never forget all human systems of justice, at their best, still are far from the perfect justice imparted by God in his kingdom.

In the same way human laws are far from perfection, the system that administrates the application of those laws also is imperfect. Thankfully, this is not the case with divine justice, since God's law is perfect, and he administers his kingdom in accordance with his justice. Both God's law and justice are perfect.

The biblical call has not changed: "*Hacer justicia y amar misericordia*"—"Do justice, and love mercy" (Micah 6:8). As Christ's followers, we know seeking first God's kingdom and his justice comprise the foundation of this journey. It is our responsibility to search for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, since it is only in his will that justice finds its perfect fulfillment.

## **Three biblical terms for justice**

In both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, justice is a virtue with particular prominence in the commandment of loving our neighbor (Leviticus 19:18).

*Mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט) is a Hebrew term that gives a restorative sense of justice from a legal viewpoint—as used in Micah 6:8 quoted above.

At the same time, *tzedeq* (צֶדֶק)—seen in Deuteronomy 16:20—is a concept of social justice and solidarity with the more vulnerable that gives value to their dignity.

In the New Testament, the Greek term *dikaiosuné* (δικαιοσύνη) is seen as a virtue that belongs to God, and citizens of his kingdom ought to seek it (Matthew 6:33).

These three terms for justice are spread throughout Scripture as essential in the fulfillment of God’s will.

## Embodying kingdom justice

As Christ’s disciples, we need to listen to the words and follow the steps of our Master. Jesus did much to bring down the religious, cultural, economic, racial and political barriers within and outside his context.

In *Kingdom Ethics*, David Gushee and Glen Stassen rightly assert, “Kingdom is something we do, not just wait for.”

Kingdom praxis, such as justice, healing, racial reconciliation, community building, and deliverance, are part of this endeavor Christians need to present as the biblical response to the different forms of social injustice.

We are not to be conformed to worldly systems, but are to be transformed in our mind—and hearts, in the Hebrew context—to “act justly and to love mercy” toward our neighbor in its different biblical expressions—*mishpat*, *tzedeq* and *dikaiosuné*.

How many Vanessa Guillens and George Floyds still exist in our world? How many of us are willing to heal those wounds, to bring the presence of

Christ among those people?

## Living justice where you are

As a Latino, my call is not only addressed toward those discriminated against because of their skin tone or accent and the social injustice Hispanics commonly suffer as immigrants or marginalized people in the barrios—Spanish-speaking neighborhoods.

As a follower of Christ's example, my call is to act opposite of every kind of injustice within and outside my context, starting with my own *oikos*—family or home. Similarly, what can you do in your *oikos* to minimize the social injustice around you?

For now, as we do our best to get closer to the ideal of divine justice, let's claim together: "Que venga pronto tu Reino Señor"—"May your kingdom come soon, Lord" (Matthew 6:10).

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