

Voices: Right now, justice looks like righteous anger in action

August 31, 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.

*"... let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).*

I was on a call recently with a group of women involved in ministry. Some are ministers. Others are teachers. Several are in leadership roles at their churches.

As we discussed our issues serving in the church, one of the ladies asked a question about the challenge of being perceived as angry and the stereotype that accompanies the perception of a woman who speaks up.

I have been wrestling with this idea of anger. As a society, we are more comfortable with rage and other manifestations of anger, like hate, than we are with displays of righteous anger, which Jesus demonstrated.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we see Jesus upset with something he witnessed. He saw the house of God being used for something other than it was intended.

“Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers’” (Matthew 21:12-13).

Jesus exhibited righteous anger. He did not stand back and watch injustice occur. In that moment, he did not just speak up; he did something.

Many would describe his anger as righteous anger. Righteous anger is a response to the mistreatment of others and to sin.

Righteous anger speaks out

In this season when righteous anger not only is needed but is critical, much of the church has remained quiet, refusing to speak out on behalf of those who are part of the body of Christ.

As we witness racial injustices against Black Americans, there has been a deafening silence from pulpits and congregations across our country.

I am reminded of a parable in Luke 15. “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:4-7).

Jesus is not saying the 99 sheep are not important, but when one is lost and needs to be reunited and returned to the flock, it is important that we find that sheep and bring it back into the fold.

Love at the core of God's will

At the core of justice is God's will and an understanding that without love, we are like clanging cymbals (1 Corinthians 13:1). We create noise that continues to divide and separate the church. Our lack of love could be the very thing driving away those to whom we are called to serve and minister.

1 John 4:20-21 says: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister."

Right now, justice looks like the righteous anger of Jesus.

Right now, justice looks like reconciliation and repentance and restoration.

Right now, justice requires speaking up on behalf of those who have been separated from the body of Christ because of racism and discrimination.

Right now, justice is love for those who do not look like us or live the way we do.

I pray we begin to live and embody the Lord's prayer: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew is a member of the board of directors of Buckner International; former national director of community engagement for World Vision, U.S. Programs; and is vice president of community affairs and strategic alliances for the State Fair of Texas. She is a member of

Cornerstone Baptist Church in South Dallas under the leadership of Pastor Chris Simmons. The views expressed are those solely of the author.

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