

THEOLOGY ROUNDTABLE

JUSTICE *and the* GOSPEL



Peninsula Bible Church
February 2013

Danny Hall will lead our discussion. Danny Hall was a pastor at Peninsula Bible Church for ten years, serving in college ministry, preaching, missions and as an elder. Before coming to PBC he was a missionary and pastor in Eastern Europe. He now serves as the Senior Pastor at Valley Community Church in Pleasanton and is on the board of the Bay Area Anti-Trafficking Coalition.



Introduction:

Justice and the Gospel

Micah 6:8 says, “*He has told you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*” This familiar verse is simple yet illusive, straight forward yet complicated to live out. What does it mean to do justice? The following passages give us a framework to consider this question.

Genesis 1:26-27

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them

Isaiah 1:10-20

10 Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

11 “The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?” says the Lord. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

12 When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts?

13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

14 Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

15 When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!

16 Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong.

17 Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

18 “Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; 20 but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Isaiah 58:5-9a

5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

Amos 4-8

4: 1. Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, “Bring us some drinks!”

2 The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness: “The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks.

3 You will each go straight out through breaches in the wall, and you will be cast out toward Harmon,” declares the Lord.

4 “Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years.

5 Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings—boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do,” declares the Sovereign Lord.

6 “I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the Lord.

7 “I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was still three months away. I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up.

8 People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the Lord.

9 “Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, destroying them with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the Lord.

10 “I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the Lord.

11 “I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the Lord.

12 “Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, Israel, prepare to meet your God.”

13 He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the Lord God Almighty is his name.

5: 1 Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you:

2 “Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again, deserted in her own land, with no one to lift her up.”

3 This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Israel: “Your city that marches out a thousand strong will have only a hundred left; your town that marches out a hundred strong will have only ten left.”

4 This is what the Lord says to Israel: “Seek me and live;

5 do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal, do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing.”

6 Seek the Lord and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it.

7 There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.

8 He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns midnight into dawn and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the Lord is his name.

9 With a blinding flash he destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin.

10 There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth.

11 You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.

12 For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

13 Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil.

14 Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is.

15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

16 Therefore this is what the Lord, the Lord God Almighty, says: “There will be wailing in all the streets and cries of anguish in every public square. The farmers will be summoned to weep and the mourners to wail.

17 There will be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through your midst,” says the Lord.

18 Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light.

19 It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him.

20 Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light— pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

21 “I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.

22 Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.

23 Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.

24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

25 “Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel?

26 You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god—which you made for yourselves.

27 Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the Lord, whose name is God Almighty.

6:1 Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!

2 Go to Kalneh and look at it; go from there to great Hamath, and then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are they better off than your two kingdoms? Is their land larger than yours?

3 You put off the day of disaster and bring near a reign of terror.

4 You lie on beds adorned with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves.

5 You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments.

6 You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.

7 Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.

8 The Sovereign Lord has sworn by himself—the Lord God Almighty declares: “I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; I will deliver up the city and everything in it.”

9 If ten people are left in one house, they too will die.

10 And if the relative who comes to carry the bodies out of the house to burn them asks anyone who might be hiding there, “Is anyone else with you?” and he says, “No,” then he will go on to say, “Hush! We must not mention the name of the Lord.”

11 For the Lord has given the command, and he will smash the great house into pieces and the small house into bits.

12 Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness;

13 you who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debar and say, “Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?”

14 For the Lord God Almighty declares, “I will stir up a nation against you, Israel, that will oppress you all the way from Lebo Hamath to the valley of the Arabah.

7: 1 This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: He was preparing swarms of locusts after the king’s share had been harvested and just as the late crops were coming up.

2 When they had stripped the land clean, I cried out, “Sovereign Lord, forgive! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!”

3 So the Lord relented. “This will not happen,” the Lord said.

4 This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: The Sovereign Lord was calling for judgment by fire; it dried up the great deep and devoured the land.

5 Then I cried out, “Sovereign Lord, I beg you, stop! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!”

6 So the Lord relented. “This will not happen either,” the Sovereign Lord said.

7 This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand.

8 And the Lord asked me, “What do you see, Amos?” “A plumb line,” I replied. Then the Lord said, “Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.

9 “The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will

be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam.”

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. 11 For this is what Amos is saying: “‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’”

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there.

13 Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.”

14 Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees.

15 But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’

16 Now then, hear the word of the Lord. You say, “‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.’

17 “Therefore this is what the Lord says: “‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’”

8: 1 This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: a basket of ripe fruit.

2 “What do you see, Amos?” he asked. “A basket of ripe fruit,” I answered. Then the Lord said to me, “The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.

3 “In that day,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!”

4 Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land,

5 saying, “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,

6 buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

7 The Lord has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: “I will never forget any-

thing they have done.

8 “Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt.

9 “In that day,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.

10 I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.

11 “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord.

12 People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.

13 “In that day “the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst.

14 Those who swear by the sin of Samaria— who say, ‘As surely as your god lives, Dan,’ or, ‘As surely as the god of Beersheba lives’— they will fall, never to rise again.”

James 5:1-6

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.

3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look!

The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Matt. 25:31-46

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

45 “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Some questions to consider:

Why is the issue of justice such a big deal to God?

What is the church's role in issues of justice?

Many justice issues have their roots in systemic evil. How should the church as well as individual Christians respond?

What are some of the barriers to engagement in these issues?

Resources:

Generous Justice, by Tim Keller

Good News About Injustice, by Gary Haugen

The Hole in Our Gospel, by Richard Stearns

The Just Church, by Jim Martin

Websites

www.tradeasone.com

www.callandresponse.com

