

WHERE IS JUSTICE?

Dear Friends,

Where is justice when a family is losing their home through monthly high interest rates and their mortgage servicers who are receiving billions in tax payers funds from a massive federal mortgage modification program refuses to help them? Where is justice when a mother is forced to watch her baby lie there with a feeding tube in its throat, while other mothers take their babies home after birth strong and healthy? Our cry for justice can go on and on as we look about in this sin stricken world. The hurt, the pain, and the anger can seem over whelming.

Never before have I seen so many hurting people who have had one or more of their utilities shut off. In the dark without electricity unable to cook with gas they related to me the hardships they were experiencing. Mothers shared with me how their children had become sick drinking milk that had spoiled in the coolers with ice they were keeping it in, because they had no electricity. Others have shared with me how they are afraid their children are going to die in a fire as they are forced to use candles for light. But it isn't just the hundreds coming to our doors whose utilities are shut off. There are so many people with so many needs. Homeless families, women and children and there is Kate who for three weeks was living in her car with her two children homeless trying to get shelter through the city referral service. A few days before she found the help she needed at the New Life Evangelistic Center, she slept in an alley in order that her children might have room to get a good night sleep in the car. During the night she was raped in that alley as her children looked on.

A few miles away Rose was sleeping in the Park with her two children ages four and seven. As they sleep she is attacked and brutally raped in front of her children.

After Wilma's house burned down she ended up on the streets and got sick. While struggling to survive she goes to the hospital. There the state takes her children from her and puts them in foster care.

This list of desperate cases goes on and on. How do these people survive and what keeps them going? Rose, Kate and Wilma developed a ministry. This ministry consisted of confronting the injustice that was destroying their lives and that of their children. Rose and Kate took their Bibles and implemented the secrets

Paul revealed in 2 Corinthians 4. In verse 1 Paul says, “therefore since we have this ministry as we received mercy we do not lose heart.”

We are not self appointed or self-made men and women. We do not frequently choose what life thrust upon us but out of it all God forms and molds a special ministry for each of us. In each case the problems we have encountered always seems bigger than we are. We know we are neither worthy nor able to achieve the task set before us. That’s why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 “Our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant.” If you have committed your life to Jesus Christ becoming a recipient of the new covenant, then you have a ministry. To minister means to serve and that often means encountering the hard knocks of life. How we need to depend on God’s help daily.

Perhaps you are at this moment crying out along with the Psalmist in Psalm 79:5, “ How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever?” In your cries of desperation remember you are not alone. God is in control. He is love and has called us to reach out through His love to a hurting world. Throughout our world, as many as 1 billion people are living on the edge of survival. That is 1 in every 5 human beings. As followers of Jesus Christ we should be stirred by these facts.

The time has come for us to release our grip on our own wealth and the justification of our lifestyles. We must begin to hear the cries of others and start to feel the intensity of their pain. Such an adjustment is not easy. After all so much of our religion is an engagement in the pursuit of our own personal comfort and the elimination of pain in our own life. In such a climate of personalized religion it just doesn’t make sense to try to hear and respond to the needs of others. Yet Jesus declares, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40).

As we desire to be guided by the spirit of truth which Jesus speaks of in John 16: 7-15 we begin to realize we cannot dwell in truth unless we effectively take sides with the unloved, the oppressed, and the downtrodden. To do such requires not only faith but the clear-cut directives found in 2 Peter 1:3-8.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly

kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

If we are truly going to be effective and productive instruments of justice, we must first listen to the cries of the victims of injustice and then seek God for the wisdom to offer viable solutions. We are told in 1 Cor. 2:9-13 the following,

“But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,” **10** God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. **11** For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. **12** Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. **13** And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.

In the midst of the cry for justice we must ask God for the revelation He provides through His Spirit. Sometimes He shows us direct solutions for the problem of suffering and issues of injustice. Other times it means standing in solidarity with those in need. The questions of “where is justice “and why me Oh God” swirl around us. In complete desperation often without clear direction we are forced to our knees in prayer. Then as empty vessels God is free to first fill us with His peace and then gives us direction for resolution. Sometimes such direction may not come for some time. That is why we must remain steadfast.

As growing numbers of people are crying out in their despair, “Where is Justice” we can respond as ambassadors of hope for we have been given a special ministry. This is laid out for us in Psalm 82:3,4 when it declares “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Defending, rescuing and delivering the weak, the fatherless, the poor and the oppressed also involve implementing the gift of hospitality. In Luke 14:13-14 Jesus commanded, “when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you.” Christine Pohl in her book, “Making Room” explains this by stating, “God’s guest list includes a disconcerting number of poor and broken people, those who appear to bring little to any gathering except their need. The distinctive quality of Christian hospitality is that it offers a generous welcome to the “least” without concern for advantage or benefit to the host. Such hospitality reflects God’s greater hospitality that

welcomes the undeserving, provides the lonely with a home, and sets a banquet table for the hungry.”

“Images of God as gracious and generous host pervade the Biblical materials. God provides manna and quail daily in the wilderness for a hungry and often ungrateful people. God offers shelter in a hot and dry land, and refreshments through living water.”

“Writers in the New Testament portray Jesus as a gracious host, welcoming children and prostitutes, tax collection and sinners into His presence. Such welcome startled and annoyed those who generally viewed themselves as the preferred guests at gatherings. But Jesus, God incarnate, is also portrayed as a vulnerable guest and needy stranger, one who, “came to His own home” and often received no welcome (John 1:11). In His life on earth, Jesus experienced the vulnerability of the homeless infant, the child refugee, the adult with no place to lay His head, the despised convict.”

“This intermingling of guest and host roles in the person of Jesus is part of what makes the story of hospitality so compelling for Christians. Jesus welcomes and needs welcome. Jesus requires that followers depend on and provide hospitality.” As homeless people, on a planet that is truly not our home, we reach out through the love of God to be His instruments of hospitality and justice. As we reach out in this way we are able to respond to the cry, “Where is Justice” with decisive actions of love. It is this love of Christ pouring forth from us which offers the hope and help that the earth is crying out for at this hour.

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice