

# “Seeking First God’s Kingdom and His Righteousness” as Jesus’ Disciples: Justice, Righteousness, and *Agapē* Love

Dr. Elizabeth Sung (Oct. 11, 2020)

## I. God’s Kingdom and Human Kingdoms

- A. A kingdom is “a realm that is uniquely our own, where our choice determines what happens. ... Our kingdom is simply the range of our effective will. Whatever we genuinely have the say over is in our kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>
- B. God’s kingdom is “the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done.” “Everything that obeys [God and his will] is within his kingdom.”<sup>2</sup>
- C. God’s *eternal* kingdom consists in “God and the spiritual realm over which his will perfectly presides, where what he prefers is actually what happens.” It is “the *full world* of God where all that is good is preserved.”<sup>3</sup>
- D. Human kingdoms

## II. God’s Kingdom (Rule) in Action on Earth

- A. Jeremiah 9:23-24
- B. Jeremiah 22:1-5, 11-17
- C. Micah 6:8
- D. Matthew 23:23
- E. Matthew 6:24-33
- F. Matthew 11:28-30

## III. Justice

### A. Distributive Justice

1. Deuteronomy 5
2. Deuteronomy 10:12-22 (esp. vv. 14-19)
3. Summary: “Biblical justice gives priority to distribution according to basic needs. ... In Lev. 25:35, we read, ‘If members of your people become poor and their power wavers with you, you shall make them strong [*hazaq*].’ The basic needs to be met include not only matters indispensable for subsistence (such as food, clothing, and shelter [e.g. Deut. 10:18; Isa. 58:2, 7], but also the possession and control of the resources that are preconditions for meeting those needs, such as land (as means of production [e.g., Isa. 65:21-22]), secondary means of production (Job 24:3), due process of law (Exod. 23:1-3, 6-8), and freedom from subjugation (Lev. 25:39-42; Deut. 23:15-16). ...

Justice describes the deliverance of people from political and economic oppressors (Judg. 5:11), slavery (1 Sam. 12:7), and captivity (Jer. 51:10). Justice is not mere alleviation; it sets people back on their feet, restores them to community, and ends oppression (Pss. 10:15-18, 68:5-10). Justice as deliverance from oppression is demanded of the government (Ps. 72:1, 4; Jer 21:12; 22:2-3). Such justice is foundation to political rule (Prov. 29:14) and is universally required (Dan. 4:27). It is central to the work of the coming messianic king (e.g., Isa. 11:4-5; Ezek. 34:15-16, 23-24).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 90, 83.

<sup>4</sup>Stephen Charles Mott, “Justice, Distributive,” in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 437-38.

## B. Retributive Justice

1. “Retribution”
2. Punishment

## C. Restitution and Reparation in the OT and the NT—*not in modern Western judicial systems*

### 1. Exodus 22

### 2. Numbers 5:5-8

<sup>5</sup>The Lord said to Moses, <sup>6</sup>“Say to the Israelites: ‘Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the Lord is guilty <sup>7</sup>and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged. <sup>8</sup>But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the Lord and must be given to the priest, along with the ram with which atonement is made for the wrongdoer.

### 3. Luke 19:8-9

## D. Restorative Justice (includes—but is not limited to—*restitution and reparation*)

Approach to criminal justice whose primary focus is “repairing the damage caused by the criminal act and restoring, insofar as possible, the dignity and well-being of all those involved. ...

There is a pronounced restorative dimension to OT criminal law. For many crimes, the typical penalty was restitution, together with varying levels of compensation depending on the seriousness of the injury and the intent of the offender (Exod. 22:1, 4, 7, 9; Lev. 6:1-7; Num. 5:5-8; Prov. 6:30-31; cf. Lk. 19:8). In every case redress went to the victim, not to the state, and the overarching concern was the renewal of *shalom*, peace, in the community.

The NT teaching on justice has a strongly restorative character. The restoring impulse of divine justice is supremely shown in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; 3:12-31; 5:1) and the beneficiaries of such injustice are expected to show a persistent dedication to justice and restoration when wrongdoing occurs in their midst (Matt. 5:21-26; 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; cf. 2 Cor. 2:5-11). ‘My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness’ (Gal 6:1).”<sup>5</sup>

## IV. Showing “Love” (*agapē*) to Enemies as Jesus’ Disciples/God’s Children (versus “Desire”/Feelings)

### A. Romans 13:8-10

### B. Romans 12:9, 17-21

### C. Luke 6:27-45

## V. “Peace” (*shalōm; eirenē*)

## VI. Implications: Seeking God, his rule and his righteousness on earth, as Jesus’ disciples

Distributive Justice – seeing that the basic needs of each and all are met [Mott] is the duty of the entire community

- Deut 5 and Deut 10
- governing authorities’ duty: to legislate and administer resources justly; to end oppression
- “distribution according to needs”; “restoration to community” “deliverance”; “take up the cause of the oppressed”: “justice does not merely alleviate, but sets people them back on their feet again” [Mott]

Redress of Wrongdoing - Violations of Justice

- Retributive Justice
- Restorative justice (including *making restitution* and *making reparation*)

*Agapē* (as Jesus defined and practiced it: forgiving and giving from the abundance we receive) and Discipleship (doing justice, mercy, and faithfulness, seeking *shalom*, as we walk carefully with God)

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<sup>5</sup>Christopher Marshall, “Justice, Restorative,” in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 438-39.