

Streams of Living Water

Week 5 - The Social Justice Tradition The Compassionate Life

Sermon Notes for Housegroups

Main Scriptures: Amos 5: 18-24
Matthew 20: 30-34

Suggested Songs: 381 -Make me a Channel of your Peace
664 - Beauty for Brokenness

'The power to be the kind of people we were created to be and the power to do the works of God upon the earth places us on solid ground to engage the demands of the social arena. And no place is in greater need of people full of the Holy Spirit and divine love. The social justice stream of Christian life and faith focuses upon justice and shalom in all human relationships and social structures. This compassionate way of living addresses the gospel imperative for equity and magnanimity among all peoples.' (Streams of Living Water page 119 ed 2004)

Amos 5:24

'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream.'

We live in an age where we so often see injustice, but can we truly ever achieve justice without mercy?

Discuss:-

1. Where do we see injustice in the world, in our own country? Have we been victims of injustice or know others who have suffered in this way? How **do we** react to injustice? How **should we** react? What does it stir in our emotions?

The gospels emphasis the compassionate nature of Jesus, he placed no limit on his love for people. The social outcasts of the day, the marginalized, the poor, the sick, the demon possessed.

Suggested additional verses expressing the compassion of Jesus

Matt 9:35-36

Matt 14:14

Matt 15:32

Matt 20:34

Mark 1:40-42

Mark 8:1-2

Luke 15:20

Jesus identified with people's needs. He was not afraid to touch a leper, an absolute prohibition of his day. He cared for peoples well being - feeding the 5,000 and 4,000.

His teaching included the need for compassion - The parable of the Prodigal Son. His discourse on the sheep and the goats - "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matt: 25: 40)

Discuss:

1. If then we are followers of Christ and we seek to grow in his image through the Holy Spirit, should not the natural consequence be that we too develop a compassionate and caring nature?
2. Can pride, or perhaps the fear of rejection cause us not to show compassion to others? Have we been affected in this way?
3. Quite clearly we should be aware of the possibility of putting ourselves in personal danger, but are there occasions when the outward appearance of people deter us from showing compassion?
4. Do we take the obvious for granted, fail to recognise people in need when perhaps a friendly hand extended might be grasped. For example - the elderly independent person living alone who always appears to cope and never asks for help, becomes unwell or hasn't been seen for several days, or you are aware hasn't been able to get out because of bad weather - Do we feel confident to enquire if they need help, or do we tell ourselves 'They must be alright or they would ask for help'.
'Are we prepared to lift the lid to see what's underneath'?
5. We live in a fractured and needy world. Do we continuously take before God in prayer the plight of our neighbours in this global village we now live in. Can we share experiences where our prayers have stimulated us to action?

Conclusion:

We are saved by the Grace of God, we cannot earn salvation. But it is a strange Christianity that fails to cause us to have compassion for others and results in good works. (James 2:14-26)