

Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said.

¹⁵ Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.....

²¹ I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²² Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.

²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

When he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs coming out of the tombs met him. They were so fierce that no one could pass that way. ²⁹ Suddenly they shouted, 'What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?' ³⁰ Now a large herd of swine was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹ The demons begged him, 'If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.' ³² And he said to them, 'Go!' So they came out and entered the swine; and suddenly, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and perished in the water. ³³ The swineherds ran off, and on going into the town, they told the whole story about what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴ Then the whole town came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighbourhood.

Prayer: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."

A farmer consulted a lawyer friend about his case. He had built a house on the land of another farmer and now the other farmer was suing him, demanding that the house be demolished. The lawyer calmly explained to his farmer friend that he was in the wrong, he should not have built a house on another person's land and he advised the farmer to settle

out of court and cut his losses.

"But what if I send a nice ram to the judge, as a gift" the farmer asked. The lawyer laughed heartily and explained that he knew the judge who was literally the most upright and noble man. He was without limits when it came to fighting injustice. The lawyer told his friend, "If you tried to bribe him you would definitely lose the case!"

A couple of months passed and the farmer and the lawyer met up again. The farmer smiled as he told his friend that he had won his case. The lawyer couldn't believe his own ears. How could the most upright judge he knew have made such an obvious mistake?

"How on earth did that happen?" he asked.

"I sent the judge a ram as a gift.....in my opponent's name."

Our reading from Amos has a lot to say about God, Christians, justice and injustice. God hates evil and calls His people to do the same. God's people are to "seek good and not evil ... hate evil and love good ... and ... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Christians are called to care about all the injustices that they encounter and to stand up against them.

But what is it that causes us to ignore injustice, to turn a blind eye to it or to seemingly not even be aware of it?

Perhaps it is the privileged and comfortable lives that we have that cause us to not be aware of the poverty and mistreatment of others. Perhaps our advantaged lives dull our senses to the needs of others and the abuse that they endure? Or maybe it is the "fear of man" that causes us to not stand up against what is wrong in the world. Perhaps we fear being labelled as troublemakers or we fear that we will acquire a bad reputation that will damage our social standing. Or maybe we fear being given a political or theological label that may harm us, our families, our hometowns or our career prospects. God however, does not call us to build up our own reputations but rather to build up His kingdom; the kingdom of righteousness, truth, justice and peace.

From the Scriptures we learn that God is the Rock who is perfect and just. He is the King, strong and mighty whose ways are just and true. His judgements are right and fair. God defends the needy and is kind to those who are in deprived circumstances. The prophet Micah reminds us that God has told us what is good and what He requires of His followers; to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. God wants us to be like Him, to stand tall for justice, to love what He loves and to hate what He hates.

So what then if we neglect justice, if we don't care about what is wrong when we encounter it?

If we fail to fight injustice and allow it to go unchecked we are failing to live as we should. Justice gives to people what is right for them to have whilst injustice treats others worse than they deserve. People deserve to be respected, and the more respect they deserve, and

the less we render, the greater the injustice. Everyone is made in the image of God and loved by God. That means to disrespect others is to disrespect God their maker.

God also deserves the highest respect, more than anyone else. He deserves respect, praise, gratitude, love, allegiance and obedience. Yet every single human being has fallen short or will fall short of properly respecting and worshipping God. That means that every human is guilty of an injustice that is infinitely worse than all the injustices ever committed against humankind throughout all of history. As well as the injustice of mistreating each other we are all at times guilty of the injustice of not respecting God.

So what is God's solution to how we all fail to do justice and to walk rightly with God as we should?

God solution was to embrace every injustice against Him and against humankind on the cross. At Calvary, Jesus out of His infinite love forgave every human injustice of the past present and future. On the cross, Jesus by His infinite love triumphed over all injustice as He died for everyone. Just before dying Jesus said,

"Father, forgive them ..."

Love, mercy and forgiveness triumphed over every injustice ever committed and also over every judgement that humankind justly deserved.

So where does that leave us?

It leaves us forgiven for every injustice, (wrong) that we have ever committed and freed to do better in the future. It leaves us able to be helped by God to seek good and not evil, free to have God as our permanent companion through life and free to stand up for justice.

We cannot trick God who is our Judge like the farmer did.

We cannot ignore Jesus our advocate in heaven who speaks truth to us like the farmer ignored his lawyer friend.

And we should not commit or ignore injustice as the farmer did by building on his neighbour's land.