
FIVE MINUTES FOR JUSTICE

Contributed by Jim Jordal
Thursday, 05 September 2013

FIVE MINUTES FOR JUSTICE

By Jim Jordal

Justice is a universal concept. All societies have some conception of what they consider to be equitable, fair, and helpful to their group. There are minor differences, but in essence justice means doing what is right and thought to be vital to the health of individuals and their groups.

But we don't always practice what we believe. Individual egos, excessive wealth, and the human need to dominate conspire to destroy justice in many societies, including our own. Someone needs to advocate for justice whenever and wherever it becomes threatened by the holders of power.

Because it transcends people, groups, governments, religions, societies and all other factors composing what it means to be human, justice is perhaps the major message of Scripture. Old Testament law defined it, the prophets advocated it, Jesus came paid for it, and the remainder of the New Testament identifies how it can be implemented in human relationships. It is what we ask for in the Lord's Prayer when we pray that "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Since justice is so important to God and to us, how can most churches continue to so studiously ignore it? We read about it, we mention it, but seldom do we preach about it or attempt to directly do it. We give generously to charity, but how often do we advocate for justice by identifying and criticizing the institutions and policies that create the need for charity? We defend ourselves by claiming that churches should not enter politics. That much is true, but how about speaking truth to power by telling them exactly what God says concerning what they are doing? If justice is this important, then perhaps we should make more room for it in our worship services.

So now an idea! Most people reading this article attend some sort of worship service in some place of worship. Others attend meetings at their lodges, community groups, or what have you. These meetings have at least one thing in common—they have some sort of gathering structured to include inspirational moments, ideas for better living, encouragement to action, or public sharing of doctrines and philosophies.

So why not speak to whomever organizes such things at your meeting place about including a short time for imparting information and encouraging action for justice, using the most common cultural definitions of justice. You can call it Five Minutes for Justice if you want. It could include Bible readings and examples of justice applied in human settings. It would certainly include exhortations to action for justice. It could include human-interest stories from the electronic or print media. It could even include victims themselves sharing their life stories. There is no limit to how effective this mode of

transmission could be in the life of a church. People, especially young people, need action. What better way to show active people what it means to do the Lord's work?

Yes, it will threaten some people—those so concerned about escaping for post-church breakfast with friends that they resist anything adding a few minutes to the service. It may also threaten conservatives who have trouble with new ideas, liberals who think they have all the answers, and the custodians of tradition who hate for anything to intrude upon their need to preserve things as they have always been.

We have worship time for prayer, singing, preaching, announcements, creeds, liturgy, greeting one another, and about everything else. So why not have some time for the major message of the Bible that will honor God by presenting what he considers important? If we don't wish to add to the length of the service, perhaps we could do it in place of the usual music during the offering.

But think of the potential benefits: resurgence of life in moribund groups, new challenges for members, and finally, taking some direct action to engage the issue that threatens to tear society apart—that of economic justice for workers, women, soldiers, retirees, students, home owners, and everyone else for that matter.

I don't see how anyone can peruse the frightening world situation of today and the absence of justice in about every aspect of human life, yet claim that something like this is unnecessary. Think about it.