



Bible Reading Plan : 40 Days on Justice

Day 31

Mercy and not Sacrifice

Read > Matthew 11:20-12:14; 15:1-28

Contemplate > How does Jesus offend the Pharisees by his reinterpretation of the Sabbath? What important lesson does Jesus try to teach the Pharisees about

God's heart for justice over sacrifice? How does Jesus define defilement? What does righteousness look like according to these teachings of Jesus? If Jesus expects our hearts to be clean of "evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander" does this make his expectations higher or lower than the rules the Pharisees lived by? What is Jesus' expectations about righteousness and justice in his kingdom? The Canaanites were seen by the Jews to be unclean as they were Gentiles, so how surprising is it that Jesus commends the Canaanite woman for her faith, after having discussed with the Jews what it is that makes a person clean or unclean (righteous/unrighteous)?

Day 32

The Sheep and the Goats

Read > Matthew 23:1-24:2; 25:31-46

Contemplate > Why do you think that Jesus berates the Scribes and Pharisees for their observance of the Law? What are the Scribes and Pharisees missing? What

might we be missing sometimes, when we turn up to services, tithe and read our bibles? What does Jesus want people to do instead? How is righteousness and justice more than obeying the rules? What does Jesus say will be the consequence of the Scribes and Pharisees not getting it (Matthew 23:37-24:2)? What does Jesus say will be the deciding factor in the final judgement of whether people know him and would inherit the kingdom or that they didn't know him, and would go into eternal judgement? How should this impact the way we live our lives? In what areas do we sometimes go through the religious motions, and not fulfil God's mandate for righteousness and justice?



Day 33

Mary's Song & Jesus' Mission Statement

Read > Luke 1:46-55; 4:16-30

Contemplate > How does Mary's song reflect the Old Testament themes of righteousness and justice? What does she list as the key aspects of God's rule over Israel? Luke 4:18-19 is sometimes referred to as Jesus' Mission Statement. What does it identify as the key aspects of his mission? How does Jesus' mission relate to justice? What do you think is "good news to the poor"? What does liberty for the captives and the oppressed look like? How will this good news for the poor translate for today's third world? What about for the girls who are sold into sexual slavery by their families because they can't afford to feed them? What about children who are abducted and forced to become child soldiers? What about for people who work in sweat shops so that westerners can have cheap goods? How does good news for the poor translate into bad news for those who benefit from their oppression? How will the world look different when Jesus' "good news for the poor" agenda is fully implemented? Why do you think that the people in Nazareth were offended by the idea of good news for the poor, why do you think that Jesus drew attention to the fact that God often give justice to the despised Gentiles (verses 25-27)? In what ways does justice for others offend our sensibilities?

Day 34

Devouring of Widows

Read > Luke 20:45-21:4

Contemplate > Read this passage as one block, ignoring the chapter break and headings. What is the link between Jesus' condemnation of the Scribes for "devouring widows' houses" and the story of the widow's offering? How is the widow's offering an example of the Scribes devouring a widow's livelihood? In what ways do you think that the elderly and widow/ers are exploited today? In what ways could pensioners be better supported? What other justice issues affect vulnerable people in our society? What justice issues affect widows in developing countries? What can we do to affect change, to protect the vulnerable and to provide support for them?

Day 35

The Unjust Death of Jesus

Read > Luke 23:13-56

Contemplate > What justice issues are in the story of Jesus' death? Why did Pilate execute Jesus? Are there times when justice is not done in our society because of external pressures on the system? If Jesus was unjustly executed, after a lifetime of oppression under the Romans, and persecution by his own people, just based on his experience as a human, how do you think he feels about issues of justice? Do you think he identifies with the victims of injustice, oppression and persecution? Do you think that he is on the side of the victims or the perpetrators? What difference should following an unjustly executed, oppressed and persecuted saviour have on how we view injustice in our world? In what ways do we accommodate to the "Roman Empire" of our day? In what ways do we side with the oppressors and the persecutors? What changes do we need to make?