

“It’s just not fair!”

We talk a lot about justice, it seems. We want to see justice done, and cry out that it’s just not fair when someone is treated poorly (especially when the injustice is aimed at us). At extremes we will demand retribution, even vengeance. Now imagine someone in modern society, someone who is clamoring for justice and screams, “That’s not fair!” Does that person appear humble in your imagination? Mine neither.

God tells us to exercise justice differently. He tells us that justice is closely related to mercy, and that in order to do it right we need to develop humility as well. This is so different – as God’s way often is – when compared to the way the world tells us to behave. Let’s spend this week learning what it means to be merciful and just.

Monday – Justice, Mercy, Humility

“O be very sure that no man will learn anything at all, unless he first will learn humility.” Edward Bulwer-Lytton

1. Please read Micah 6:8. What is the good that God requires of his people? What is one way you can pursue justice? Love mercy? Walk humbly? How do these three relate to one another?
2. Read Luke 18:9-14. How does Jesus characterize humility in this passage? What did Jesus say about the man who was better at following the rules? When do you find yourself acting more like that man?

Digging Deeper (optional) – Look at James 4:1-12. What is the relationship between humility and God’s grace? How do James’s warnings show some ways we might act unjustly? What does he advise us to do instead?

Making it Personal: Ask God to draw you into true humility in your relationship with him and with those around you.

Tuesday – Obedience Leading to Mercy

“Lowliness is the base of every virtue, and he who goes the lowest builds the safest.” Philip Bailey

1. Please read Hosea 6:6. What does God esteem, even above sacrificial worship? How can you acknowledge him while acting in mercy?
2. Read 1 Samuel 15:1-23. What was Saul supposed to have done? What did he do instead? How did he try to cover it up when Samuel called him on it?

Text Insight: Notice the similarity between mercy and obedience as they are compared to sacrifice in these two passages (see Hosea 6:6 and 1 Samuel 15:22).

3. Read Micah 6:6-8. In what way has Micah learned the lesson that Saul failed?

Making it Personal: Ask God to lead you in obedience so that you will be able to exercise mercy in his name.

Wednesday – Doctor the Sick, Seek the Lost

“Nearest the throne itself must be the footstool of humility.” James Montgomery, 18th-19th c. English poet

1. Please read Matthew 9:9-13. What did Jesus say to those who placed their reliance on living by the rules?

Text Insight: Tax collectors worked for the Roman government; they collected taxes from their fellow Jews and sent the money to the Roman authorities. Unscrupulous men made a lot of money by over-collecting or skimming money before handing it over to Rome. The Jews considered these tax collectors to be traitors.

2. Why do you think the Pharisees needed to hear this? Why do you need to hear this?
3. This wasn’t the only time Jesus reached out to these societal outcasts. In Luke 19:1-10, he reaches out to the evil tax collector, Zacchaeus. How did Zacchaeus demonstrate humility and obedience? How do you think the people in verse 7 took Jesus’ statement in verses 9-10?

Prayer Focus: Pray for FBC. Ask God to help us grow in mercy to those in need of help.

Thursday – Fairness and Mercy

“Humility: that low, sweet root, from which all heavenly virtues shoot.” Thomas Moore, 18th-19th c. Irish poet

1. Please read Leviticus 19:15 and Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Using these passages, describe God’s attitude about fairness.
2. Now look at Matthew 20:1-15. What is the point of this passage?
3. Rewrite Matthew 20:15 in your words. How might this truth guide you in exercising generosity in God’s name?

Making it Personal: Though generosity includes money, it also involves many other things such as our time. How can you demonstrate generosity to others in such a way that God is honored? Ask God for the strength and creativity to be generous.

Friday – Useful or Useless

“Humility is to make a right estimate of one’s self.” Charles Spurgeon, 19th c. British preacher

1. Please read Philemon 1-25. Where was Paul? Why was he able to be so concerned for Onesimus?

Text Insight: Onesimus was a slave owned by Philemon. Apparently they were both Christians but Onesimus, for some reason, felt the need to run away to Paul rather than stay with his master.

2. Onesimus’s name means “useful.” Can you detect where Paul used that meaning to make a word play? Why do you think Paul wanted to use a light touch in these instructions to Philemon? What does this tell you about choosing your own methods in dealing with and on behalf of others?
3. How is Paul exercising mercy and justice both to Philemon and to Onesimus?

For the Weekend:

1. Read Leviticus 25:8-55. How does the year of Jubilee promote mercy? Promote justice? Promote humility?
2. Read Luke 16:19-31. What had God given the rich man (v. 29)? Where should you turn, then, to learn what you need to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God?