

Series: The Blessing

November 25, 2018

Title: Justice

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Text: Matthew 5:6

The Fourth Blessing

“That’s not fair!”

What makes you say, “That’s not fair”?

It could be the driver in front of you who checks their text messages during a 10 second green light, then speeds through the intersection when it turns yellow – leaving you with the red light.

How about seeing someone pull into a handicap parking spot when they don’t have a handicap tag in their windshield?

Sharing a plane seat with someone’s service animal?

Discovering that somebody ate the ham sandwich you put in the lunchroom fridge?

Getting a speeding ticket for going 85 mph on the interstate, when you were doing 65 and some wise guy sped past you?

The Justice Instinct:

David Rock points out that “we crave fairness, and some people will spend their life savings and even their lives to get it.” The demand for justice or fairness is hard-wired into our brains.

Fair treatment – for us or someone else – activates the reward region of the brain. Unfair treatment activates the part of the brain associated with disgust, as in a disgusting taste! Think of it: experiencing or witnessing injustice evokes the same feelings as a mouthful of rotten food. No wonder justice issues arouse such passion in our society, on all sides of the political spectrum.

The Fourth Blessing:

Jesus tapped into this hunger for justice when He spoke the Fourth Blessing:

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Matthew 5:6 NIV

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Hungry for "righteousness" means hungry for being right in our own lives, to be sure. But at a deeper level it means being famished for God to bring justice to all the unjust and broken places in our world.

This little riddle embraces the reality of what it feels like to yearn for the world to be made right. But it also promises that God will intervene as the Judge who brings true justice. So how do we get from craving for justice to God's banquet table?

Hungry and Thirsty for Justice

Hungry and Thirsty:

We have to start with where we are: right in the middle of an unjust world. And isn't that where Jesus begins? He starts by talking about those "who hunger and thirst for justice."

Hungry and thirsty: The very first crisis that Israel faced on its journey from slavery to the Promised Land was a crisis of food and water. The journey to a "land flowing with milk and honey" took them through a desert with no supermarkets or bottled water. As the Psalmist reminds us:

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Psalm 107:5 NIV

They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

Fairness triggers:

Where in your life are you hungry and thirsty for justice – God's justice?

What triggers your "It's not fair" response?

Take a moment to write down your fairness triggers on a piece of paper. What kind of feelings come up when you think about these injustices? What would you like God to do about these injustices?

Justice

"...they will be filled!"

In the middle of a horribly unjust and unfair world, Jesus announced that God's justice will truly come to those who hunger and thirst for it.

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Matthew 5:6 NIV

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, **for they will be filled.**"*

Filled! Satisfied! Ready to push back from the table because you just can't fit anymore of God's goodness and justice in your life!

The Psalmist described what it's like to travel the desert of need in a broken world, thirsty and hungry, with our lives ebbing away. But then he writes:

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Psalm 107:6-9 NIV

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.

*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, **for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.***

The Just King:

What made the difference between wandering, hungry and thirsty in the desert, and being satisfied with good things? The Just King. God stepped in to meet the need and bring His people to their destination.

What makes it possible for Jesus to say: "You're happy when you crave justice, because you will be satisfied"? Jesus, the Just King.

He didn't just offer up a nice little proverb stating some vague, supposedly timeless truth. No, He made a radical pronouncement: He announced that at long last the Just King was present to bring fairness and justice to His world.

You might not see the justice yet, but the King was already on the case, and the verdict will certainly come. When it does, wrongs will be made right, injustices corrected, unfairness addressed in all of its many forms.

Justice!

So how do we embrace this Good News in the middle of our complicated lives and relationships?

David Rock offers several strategies that Jesus would have affirmed:

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- Label injustice when you see it. Don't just react.
- When you feel unjustly treated, take time to try to see things from the other person's point of view.
- Let yourself feel the hunger and thirst. Don't repress it.
- Get involved in making wrongs right. Do something positive.
- Most of all: Give the unfair thing to God; He is the Judge.

You can rail against poverty and hunger, or you can volunteer at Martha's Kitchen. You can hold a grudge, or you can put your hurt in God's hand and seek the path of forgiveness.

Most of all, we must remember that the only way that our hunger and thirst for justice will ever be filled is by the Just King who made and rules His world. And be thankful that He is as merciful as He is just!

Exercise:

Now, take out that piece of paper on which you listed your fairness triggers. What would it be like to hand the whole business over to God and let Him be the Judge? What would it be like to no longer have to keep tabs on the Universe?

Would you be willing to be both “hungry and thirsty for justice,” and also accept a dinner invitation for God’s Justice Banquet? Would you be willing to let Him prepare the feast of fairness in His time and in His perfect way?

If so, come up and pin our fairness issues on the cross. It was there that Jesus broke the back of injustice once and for all – not by cursing the world into oblivion, but by saying: Father forgive!!!

Bon appetit!