

THE LORD LOVES JUSTICE

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 61:8–62:12

Focus Scripture: Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a (end with “Desolate”)

Key Verses: For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Isaiah 61:8 (NRSV)

ISAIAH 61:8-11; 62:2-4A (END WITH “DESOLATE”) (NRSV)

Isaiah 61:8-11

8 For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

62:2-4a (end with “Desolate”)

2 The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.

3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;...

ISAIAH 61:8-11; 62:2-4A (END WITH “DESOLATE”) (KJV)

Isaiah 61:8-11

8 For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

62:2-4a (end with “Desolate”)

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate:...

INTRODUCTION

The scripture, especially the **Key Verse**, puts God's position on justice beyond any doubt. But the passage goes even further. It reinforces three factors about God's view of justice. First, God rewards people who stand for justice. Second, when God punishes a nation for injustice the punishment lasts only for a set time. And third, there is a strong link between the practice of justice and economic prosperity in a nation.

But the association between justice, the rule of law, and economic prosperity is not only shown in the Bible. The World Bank also recognizes it. So, we don't have to keep the issue of justice in a "religious and emotional goodness" box. When we consider the economic implication of the practice of justice, we find more reason why we should urge leaders to make the practice of justice a feature of their administration. We explore aspects of the link between justice and prosperity in our examples and case study below.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

In the scriptures we can see God's promise of abundant living to the Jews returning out of captivity. However, we do not see these promises as ancient and exclusive to the Jewish nation. See them also as extended to us through our relations with Jesus Christ. However, we must note that to realize the promises, people must recognize and accept the character of God. The almighty is the Lord who loves justice and hates wrongdoing. Further, God is a covenant God who rewards the faithful and compensates them for their sufferings. When God's blessings are on a nation, that nation stands out as extraordinary. Through the special prosperity

of blessed people, onlookers come to recognize that God is a God of justice, and they praise the Lord.

Isaiah 62:1-4 shows God's special love for Israel (including us in spiritual Israel). They also highlighted the divine desire to see justice practiced among the Lord's people. The special prosperity



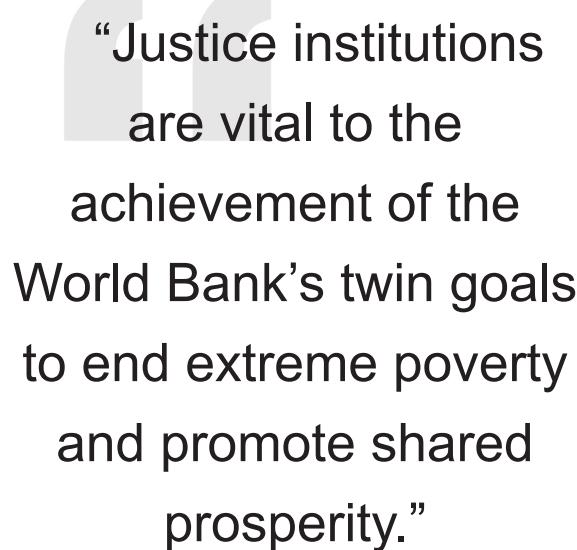
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which God releases on his people makes them the envy of the world. God's faithful people will not be put in situations where onlookers will see them as forsaken or forgotten by God. Also, the blessings do not stop at one generation. They extend to all the descendants of the blessed people (verse 5). In verses 6-10, God promised the nation security and protection. Then God renewed the prediction that the nation would be the "pride of the earth." Because they would be secured, they would enjoy the fruits of their labors. No one will rob them. Then in verses 10-12, the message points to the coming of the special one, the Messiah, who will usher in the promised new era.

SANKOFA

Through a series of special projects, the World Bank shows that it recognizes the close link between the practice of justice and the prosperity of nations. In one of its publication (see endnote) we noted, "Justice institutions are vital to the achievement of the World Bank's twin goals to end extreme poverty and promote

shared prosperity. Empirical studies demonstrate the critical role of justice for fostering a healthy business environment, enhancing growth, improving access to public services (particularly for the poor), curbing corruption and restraining the abuse of power. Justice underpins the political process by protecting individuals' rights, facilitating collective action and enabling credible commitment."



"Justice institutions are vital to the achievement of the World Bank's twin goals to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity."

As a result of this recognition, the World Bank committed resources and personnel to help many countries improve the quality of justice institutions. In Kenya, for example, one of the World Bank's projects helped the judiciary to put in place a system to track legal cases. This has enhanced the

administration of justice in that country. Similarly, in Nigeria, a Bank project helped to create legal aid centers. The Central African Republic people got assistance in promoting compliance with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. For Cambodia, it was support for the Arbitration Council to resolve labor

disputes. For Sierra Leone, the Bank offered help to paralegals to address administrative law issues and improve the delivery of health services. These were all projects to strengthen the practice of justice in these countries. As the benefits of these projects flow through societies, we should see in these countries some of the prosperity conditions which Isaiah saw in a liberated Israel.

(The full World Bank report on the association between justice and prosperity: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance/brief/justice-rights-and-public-safety>)

CASE STUDY

Isaiah painted a glowing image of what God had planned for the liberated Jewish people. And although some parts of the vision were spiritual, we also see in it many earthly aspects. For in every nation, we find people who hold progressive dreams for their people, especially the poor and disadvantaged. In America one such person was Henry McNeal Turner. Mr. Turner saw himself as an educator

and this was reflected in his work. His vision of a society which treated all people with respect and dignity led him to join the AME Church in 1854. In 1880 he became a bishop in the church. He spearheaded the growth of the AME Church in Georgia. His pioneering work went as far as ordaining a woman as a deacon. This was very controversial and divisive at that time.



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While many people talk glowingly about seeing better for the people, few dare to devote their lives to make that better life a reality. Bishop Turner both spoke it and worked tirelessly to see it happen. In the latter part of the 1800s he was among the pioneers who cut paths to better prospects for

Negroes. Because of Bishop Turner's achievements, many African Americans now sit high in the American society. Let us look briefly at some of those achievements.

Bishop Turner became the publication manager for the AME *The Christian*

Recorder. He used that platform to inspire and educate his people towards the same better life vision that was driving him. As a community leader in Washington, D.C., he drew many into his dream of taking their place in society. Towards that end, he did his part. For example, he scored another first when he became the U.S. Postmaster in Macon, Georgia: the first black person to hold that office. Outside the church, as a member of the Republican party he helped to motivate and organize black voters in Georgia. We must also note his contribution as one of the first black state representatives in the Georgia legislature. He represented his people there until he and other “colored” representatives were kicked out in a vote that highlighted the racial hostilities of his day. As part of his vision of seeing black people participate in all levels of society, he was part of the lobby for President Lincoln to allow Negroes into the military. He himself was one of the first African American chaplains in the U.S. military.

Bishop Turner left for us a shining example of what we can do to help bring about the better life we often daydream about.

For some, Bishop Turner is remembered for his “God is a Negro” remarks. He defended the remarks by noting that a people needed to see their reflection in their deity. To say that those remarks were considered inflammatory and divisive would be an understatement. Many people could not see (or refused to see) the greater point Turner was trying to make. Also noteworthy is his time as chairman of the board of Morris Brown College. Bishop Turner left for us a shining example of what we can do to help bring about the better life we often daydream about. And we must never forget the times in which he made his mark: a time that was bitterly hostile to people of his race. What a display of humility!

LIFE APPLICATION

Notwithstanding racism and injustices in the world today, we must admit, as a race, people of African descent have come a long way. Of course we have not yet reached the Promised Land. Still, we can see its shores from where we are now. This thought should prompt in us

great appreciation for the forerunners who built the foundation on which we now stand. Therefore, we should stop occasionally to reflect on those pioneers. In this regard, ask yourself how much you know about the work and achievements of people like Bishop Henry M. Turner and Frederick Douglass. What can we do to ensure that the work and sacrifices of such people are never forgotten? Where necessary, research the contributions they made to secure some of the privileges and opportunities we now enjoy.

As noted in the **Introduction**, it is so easy to talk about having a better life for our people. Anyone can do that, and many do. But after wishing and complaining, nothing happens. The better life comes when people create it through work, commitment, and sacrifice. Therefore, each person must think about what he or she is doing or can do to make life better for our people. We do not have to be famous or have prestigious titles to make a contribution. Everyone in his

or her corner of influence can contribute to the practice of justice in our society. Take time to consider how you will make your contribution. Again, as hinted in the **Introduction**, there is a link between the practice of justice in a country and the nation's economic health. The more widespread the practice of justice, the more prosperous the nation will be. Even the secular experts at the World Bank and United Nations recognize this. Think about what you can do to enhance justice and prosperity in your community. Put the emphasis on actions rather than words.

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Finally, we will state the obvious. Consider for a moment Psalm 127:1. It gives this warning: unless God is at the center of our efforts to do something, we are wasting time, effort, and money. Whatever we seek to do, we must be certain that we seek the approval and guidance of God. We said that this is obvious, and yes, it is. Nevertheless, many people step out on projects and programs without consulting the Lord and asking for God's help. Insure

you do not do that. And, if at this time you are involved in any program for which you have not sought God's clearance, stop and correct that now in a time of prayer and meditation.

QUESTIONS

1. What evidence do you see to support the idea that the practice of justice brings prosperity to a nation?
2. The writer in 62:1 says, "For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." What cause or issue will make you "not keep silent" or cause you not to rest?
3. How can we use reports from secular

organizations like the World Bank to make the call for more justice in our countries?

4. What more do you know of Bishop's Henry Turner's fight for justice for African Americans?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Psalm 23 gives an impressive imaginary picture of God's protection and provision for those who trust the Lord. This is the same picture projected by the set scriptures. A corporate recital of Psalm 23 is a fitting way to end this session.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for your protection and provisions. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

April 20-April 26

Monday	1 Kings 3:16-28 (Solomon Makes a Just Decision)
Tuesday	Luke 4:14-21 (Jesus Issues His Platform for Justice)
Wednesday	Leviticus 25:8-17 (The Year of Jubilee Established)
Thursday	Isaiah 49:1-7 (A Light to the Nations)
Friday	Isaiah 61:1-7 (A New Vision for the People)
Saturday	Isaiah 62:5-12 (Zion Welcomes the Redeemed Home)
Sunday	Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a (end with "desolate") (The Lord Brings the People Justice)