



Administer
Justice.org

JUSTICE SUNDAY

#MayJusticeRoll

Service Resource Kit



"This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor.'" Zech. 7:9-10

Thank you for joining our May Justice Roll campaign as you host a Justice Sunday.

The church in America has allowed culture to define justice as a political issue, rather than a biblical one. By putting a spotlight on what the Bible has to say about justice, you are calling the people of God back to one of the central themes of scripture.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells the story of how God seeks to put right what has gone wrong since sin entered the world. Just as every sermon heralds the gospel, the proclamation of God's word must also reveal God's heart for justice and how the cross assures that perfect justice will rule in God's kingdom. As your church heeds God's call to seek justice and correct oppression (Isaiah 1:17), you will find the joy of laboring in God's kingdom for the things that matter most to God.

On behalf of the National Support Center for Administer Justice and the tens of thousands of lives impacted by the gospel and justice – thank you!

We believe no one does justice alone. To that end, we have provided resources to aid you in your Justice Sunday preparation: responsive readings, sermon examples and a sample sermon outline, prayers, devotional materials, Sunday School materials for children and youth, and a list of songs for worship on the theme of justice. We pray the resources provided will enrich your service. To view additional sermons, visit bit.ly/justicesermons.



What are some of the benefits of a Gospel Justice Sunday Sermon?

- Expose people to the needs of neighbors caught in an unjust legal system
- Demonstrate the gospel and justice are not mutually exclusive but represent the heart of God evidenced from Genesis to Revelation
- Pursue the Justice of the Kingdom in culturally relevant ways to the poor and marginalized communities in your neighborhood
- Ensure neighbors would miss your church if it were gone because you seek justice and restoration for neighbors with legal needs



What should be included when preaching a sermon focused on legal injustice?



- Jesus told stories. We encourage the same. Always include your own personal connection to the issue of justice and to God's passion for justice.
- Sometimes it's easy to forget that the word justice (or injustice) means a lot of things to a lot of people. While there are many ways to address justice, on this Sunday we want to focus on the Biblical understanding of justice which is restorative. One of the Hebrew words is Tzedek which is also translated as righteousness embodying the concept of making things right by restoring what is broken. The gospel is the good news of rescuing and restoring us in our sin and justice rescues us from oppression and restores us to the flourishing God intends. This is what we mean by justice and particularly as it intersects with legal systems.
- Justice is part of God's character, His conduct and His court. He invites us to reflect justice in our character, conduct and courts. Likely people in your church have been adversely impacted by our legal system or someone close to them has. Enter this reality with compassion and hope. The Kingdom of Justice is coming and has now come. We engage injustice in victory with persistent prayer and action.
- Provide a clear ask for partnering in legal ministry for the poor and vulnerable. A pastor's sermon prompted lawyers to respond and form the largest Christian Legal Aid in America in Indianapolis. Other legal ministries began because a pastor challenged members to respond. Help your people live out their faith and go deeper in justice ministry.

Justice Sunday Responsive Reading (Option 1)

Leader: Listen you leaders. Should you not embrace justice? (Mic. 3:1)

Congregation: Together, with God's help, we will embrace justice.

Leader: He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)

Congregation: Together, with God's help, we will do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

Leader: Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. (Isa. 1:17)

Congregation: Together, with God's help, we will seek justice for the oppressed.

Leader: This is what the Lord Almighty says, 'Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor and in your hearts do not think evil of each other.'" (Zec. 7:9).

Congregation: Together, with God's help, we will administer true justice as we show mercy and compassion to one another.

Leader: Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Prov. 31:8-9)

Congregation: Together, with God's help, we will not stand silent. We will speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Leader: For this is a people plundered and looted; they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become plunder with none to rescue, spoil with none to say, "Restore!" (Isa. 42:22)

Congregation: Together, with God's help, we will rescue and restore neighbors in need.

Leader: The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene (Isa. 59:15-16)

Congregation: Together, with God's help, we will intervene for justice.

Leader: The Lord will give a longing for justice to their judges. He will give great courage to their warriors who stand at the gates. (Isa. 28:6)

All: Together, with God's help, we long for justice. In His mercy, we pray for courage. And in His strength, we take our stand to open the gates of justice for those in need.



Justice Sunday Responsive Reading (Option 2)

Leader: The Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of Justice. (Isa. 30:18)

Congregation: The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. (Ps. 33:5)

Leader: Listen you leaders. Should you not embrace justice? (Mic. 3:1)

Congregation: Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. (Isa. 1:17)

Leader: Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. (Ex. 23:6)

Congregation: Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. (Am. 5:15)

Leader: Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Prov. 31:8-9)

Congregation: I will come to put you on trial, says the Lord Almighty. I will be quick to testify against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice. (Mal. 3:5)

Leader: Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. (Mt. 23:23)

Congregation: He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)

Leader: For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:31)

All: And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice and quickly. (Lk. 18:7)

Thanks be to God.



Congregational Prayer on Biblical Justice (from Gospel Justice)

O Lord of all creation, we recognize that righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne, that love and faithfulness go before You. Rise up, O Judge of the earth; rise up and deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. Loose the chains of injustice wherever they may be found. This day we pray for our brothers and sisters round the world who are enslaved, forced to do the will of their oppressor. May they know that You hear their cries. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hands of the wicked. For we know You work righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

O God, we pray for those who groan this day from the effects of a fallen nature, from oil spills to earthquakes, volcanoes to floods. Hear their cries. For we know that You secure justice for the poor and uphold the cause of the needy. Heal our land that justice may once again roll on like a river and righteousness as a never-ending stream.

Rise up, O Judge of the earth, defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Raise up people of faith who will do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before You. Establish justice in our nation and in our neighborhood. Forgive us, O Lord, when we fall short of our pledge to be one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

As we become more divided by the way we look, may we know that You judge us for how we live. Grant us peace and free us from fear. As Lady Liberty raises her torch of hope in the harbor of New York City, may the tired, the poor and the huddled masses yearning to be free continue to find our shores a refuge and a land of freedom and opportunity.

Forgive us when we fail to provide liberty and justice for all. Help us understand the needs of the poor in our own city, and on our own block as foreclosures continue, jobs are scarce, government is stretched and laws are complex. Grant us wisdom to love our neighbor as ourselves. Empower us to provide a cup of cold water to those in need, to provide good guidance and counsel where needed and to hold out the hope that comes from a loving, just God.

Father, may we administer true justice; may we show mercy and compassion to one another. Where there is hate, may we show love; where there is hurt, may we bring healing; and where there is injustice, may we bring justice. For we know that good will come to him who is generous and gives freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.

May we be people of justice that reflect a God of justice this day and every day until You establish Your kingdom and right all the injustices of this world.

Amen.



Sample Sermon Outline: May Justice Roll

1. Why should we care about justice?

- Statistics (Find local statistics on poverty in your neighborhood. At least 71% of this number had a legal need last year and 86% of them found no help. Our neighbors need our help.)
- Basis of our nation
 - Preamble of the Constitution: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice...”
 - Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell Jr.: “Equal justice under law is not merely a caption on the façade of the Supreme Court building. It is perhaps the most inspiring ideal of our society... It is fundamental that justice should be the same, in substance and availability, without regard to economic status.
 - George Washington: “The administration of justice is the firmest pillar of government.”

2. Does seeking justice water down the Gospel?

- This controversy presupposes that the Gospel and justice are at odds.
- Francis of Assisi: “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words”
 - This is often misunderstood to suggest that words are unnecessary in preaching the Gospel and creates backlash against compassion ministries.
 - Rom 10:14: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”
- Tim Keller, *Generous Justice*: “Many believe that the job of the church is not to do justice at all, but to preach the Word, to evangelize, and build up believers. But if it is true that justice and mercy to the poor are the inevitable signs of justifying faith, it is hard to believe that the church is not to reflect this duty corporately in some way. ... You can’t love people in word only” (135).

3. Meet our God. Most of us introduce ourselves by what is important to us. My name is blank and I’m a pastor, mom, teacher, etc. How does God introduce himself?

- He says I am a “Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.” Ps. 68:5
- Jesus introduces himself to the world at a synagogue in Nazareth where he says, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Lk. 4: 18-19.
- Our God is a father to the fatherless, defender of widows, releaser of the oppressed, freer of prisoners, healer of the blind and proclaimer of good news. As Christ followers we must do the same.

4. The Faces Needing Justice [Stories from Gospel Justice book or personal]

5. The Words for Justice

- Old Testament (Hebrew)
 - מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat) judgment, the act of deciding a case; “attribute of the שֹׁפֵט (judge), justice, right, rectitude”
 - God declares that he loves this justice that balances scales for the oppressed (Ps 33:5, 37:28, 99:4)
 - צְדָקָה (tsedek) rightness, righteousness,
 - Refers to just weights in commerce (Lev 19:36, Deut 25:15), paths (Ps 23:3), offerings (Deut 33:19, Ps 4:6)
 - Referring to a case or cause (Ps 35:27), ethics (Prov 1:3, 2:9; Ezek 3:20)
 - As vindication, deliverance (Jer 23:6). This justice restores that which was broken and rights that which was wronged.
 - Both of these appear together indicating both synonymy and a comprehensive totality of righteous justice (Ho 2:21; Ps 89:14–15, 97:2; see also Lev 19:15, Ps 119:7)
- New Testament (Greek)
 - Δίκαιος (dikaios) “pert. to being in accordance with high standards of rectitude, upright, just, fair” (Titus 1:8)
 - Echoing צְדָקָה, the NT writers “emphasize a connection between upright conduct and sense of responsibility to God”
 - Δικαιοσύνη (dikaisune) “the quality of being upright” (Mt 5:6, 3:11)
 - “the quality, state, or practice of judicial responsibility w. focus on fairness” (Heb 11:33, Rev 19:11)
 - “quality or state of juridical correctness with focus on redemptive action, righteousness... approximates salvation” (2 Cor 3:9, Rom 3:25)
- These terms aren’t punitive—they have a restorative view.

6. God’s Word on Justice

- Isaiah 58 God chastises his people for fasting merely for the selfish purpose of appearing religiously humble rather than honoring him with just living. Is 58:6 “Is not this the fast that I choose: loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed[a] go free, to break every yoke?”
- Micah 6:8 “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, to walk humbly with your God?”
- Amos 5 Even though Israel appeared strong, it would fall as a result of God’s judgment. Rather than seeking the Lord, the people of Israel sought their own comfort and denied justice to the needy and God condemns Israel’s empty religious activities because they “turn justice to wormwood [bitterness, sorrow] and cast down righteousness to the earth!” (5:7, see also 5:10, 12, 15).
 - Amos entreats the people to glorify God through true covenant faithfulness and “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (5:24).

7. Working towards Justice

- Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, “The role of the church, as a participant in God’s socio-political kingdom and as His bride, is to execute divine justice on behalf of the defenseless, poor, and oppressed.” (265)
- Day-to-day decisions
- At work. Do justice by creating an environment of loving concern for customers, co-workers and community. Embrace God’s truth that “Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his business (affairs) with justice.” Ps. 112:8.

Story: Renee Gilman is a chiropractor. She saw customers in physical pain because of crushing legal burdens. She wanted to impact a whole community with the hope of the gospel and the help of a lawyer. She learned she could make a one-time investment of \$5,000 to launch a new legal ministry. Her support allowed a church in the inner city to establish a gospel justice center where a team faithfully serve each month. Hundreds of lives have been changed. Recently a grandma walked into the church – she would not have come for service, but she came to meet a lawyer. She wanted to protect her grandchild whose father died and mother was in prison. The guardianship process is complicated and no one wanted to listen to her cry for help. But the church did. Today grandma and her six year old granddaughter are together, protected, and worshipping the Lord in that church.

- At home. You can teach your children about the Good Samaritan who refused to walk by someone in need. Teach them to speak out against bullying. Teach them about unfairness and invite them to volunteer at a legal ministry.

Story: The leader of a legal ministry in Chicago brought his wife to interpret and young sons to play with kids while they waited for their mom to meet with a lawyer. They put children at ease and learned the challenges of homeless, abandoned, sometimes abused kids. Today those young men are strong advocates for justice and equal dignity for all God’s children.

- At church. Use your gifts to create or serve on a legal ministry team. Go deeper than compassion, do justice for neighbors in need.

Story: Every Saturday across America someone is walking into a church with crushing legal burdens in need of help and hope. Recently that was Angela. She walked into a church for the first time in her life. Heavily tattooed, she didn’t think she’d be welcome, but she needed to see a lawyer. When she first walked in a hospitality team member had baked fresh breakfast items and brewed coffee. Toys were out for kids and she was greeted by a smiling volunteer who helped her with forms. This was dramatically different than the government agencies she was used to. She was led to an attorney to talk about her foreclosure. When the attorney asked if she could pray for Angela, she couldn’t believe it. Weren’t lawyers all greedy, uncaring people? This important lawyer wanted to pray for her and listen to her problems? That made her cry. The attorney listened through several challenges facing Angela and put together a plan for next steps. Angela met with another volunteer who helped connect her with a food bank and invited her to church. Angela wasn’t ready for that. A couple of weeks later a volunteer called her to see if she needed anything and had followed the lawyer’s suggestions. People continued to be in touch until Angela was able to find a new place to live. Volunteers from the church helped her move. That showed her a different side of church. She attended church that next Sunday. She is still at the church and is now saved and baptized as she volunteers to help others in the church’s gospel justice center.