
God's Passion for Justice

[To be re-titled to fit most appropriately with your community]



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To the communicator of this sermon:

Thank you for choosing to introduce your community to God's passion for justice. Your choice to lead in the things that matter to God is a choice that will make a difference between life and death for so many who wait in places of deep suffering in our world today.

We hope the following outline will assist you in crafting a sermon that will not only open your community's eyes to the reality of injustice in our world, but will also move them with biblical conviction to rise in concrete action.

In summary, these are the four points we hope you might communicate in this or any message related to God's passion for justice:

1. Injustice is a great category of need in our world
2. God hates injustice and wants it to stop
3. The Church is God's plan for bringing an end to injustice
4. This work of justice is doable

We recommend framing your message around the three parts of Psalm 10 (addressing the questions, "Where is God in a world of suffering?" and "What does it look like for the poor to be preyed upon by oppressors?" and finally, "How does God regard this suffering?") You will find other suggested scripture teachings throughout this outline, but Psalm 10 will prove to be a solid backbone for the message as a whole.

We hope you will title this according to what best fits your worshipping community. Also, we will be making two more message outlines available in the coming weeks, rounding out a 3-part sermon series on justice issues.

Finally, as you prayerfully prepare to deliver your message, ask that God would enable you to inspire your community strongly towards hope; that God enable your community to be overwhelmed not by the reality of suffering but instead by the reality of God's ability to use His people to bring glorious rescue, new life and restoration.

As you give this message to your community, we would love to hear about it. Please let us know, and be in touch with any questions you might have.

We are grateful for your partnership in this work!



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1. Reading of Psalm 10/Introduction/Prayer

2. “Are God and I passionate about the same things?”

- In all the years I’ve been a Christian I’ve often asked – are God and I passionate about the same things?
 - » I know what I am passionate about – things *for* and *about me*.
- But when I really think about it and ask, “What is God passionate about?” in scripture I find that God is:
 - » Passionate about the **world**.
 - » John 3:16 – God loved the world **so** much
 - » Jesus died for us because God loved us **that** much.
- Knowing that God loved the world – the *entire* world – I wanted to see more (beyond my comfortable world of “me” and “mine”) and obey. And so...

3. Personal testimony of encountering the reality of injustice today

- [Share your personal testimony of your first encounter with justice issues/your first realization of God’s passion for those suffering from violent oppression.]
- And in the midst of all this suffering, I realized that one of the hardest things for the world to believe is that God is **good**.
- There are **so** many injustices – examples:
 - » 25,000 children die each day of hunger or hunger-related causes (U.N.)
 - » Nearly 2 million children exploited in the global sex trade (UNICEF)
 - » 27 million slaves in the world today (*National Geographic*)
- Psalm 10:1 states it well: “Why, O God, do you stand far off?” – Where are you, God?

4. “What is God’s plan? What is God’s plan for making it believable that He is good?”

- **WE** are the plan!
 - » God has chosen His people to be His plan.

» Matthew 5:14 – YOU are the light of the world.

– Doesn't say "You could be," or "I sure hope you might be someday"... we are **it**."

5. "What is INJUSTICE?"

- The word gets thrown around a lot and is often watered down in the U.S.
 - » Is it when a car viciously cuts me off in traffic?
 - » Is it when I'm in the '10 Items or Fewer' line at the grocery store and the person in front of me has 12 items?
- No, not what the Bible is talking about.
 - » Injustice, according to scripture, is a particular kind of sin – Proverbs 14:4
- *Injustice is the abuse of power* – It's when someone takes away another's life, liberty, dignity, or the fruits of their love and labor – Psalm 10:7 – 11
 - » Ecclesiastes 4:1 – Power is on the side of the oppressor
 - » The abuse of power is often happening in the lives of the poor.

6. What does injustice look like?

Concrete case examples

[We recommend sharing two or three case stories – more are available at www.ijm.org or by e-mailing institute@ijm.org.]

Mary's Story:

Mary is a Cambodian woman.
 She lives in a squatter area in Phnom Penh.
 She has a daughter – Bopha (BO-FUH) – who is 16 years old.
 But her daughter has been missing for weeks.

Mary and her husband struggle to put food on the table.
 Some local women had offered to take Bopha to the port city of Koh Kong where she could reportedly get a job peeling shrimp.

Mary had repeatedly refused the offers because she didn't want her teenage daughter so far away and worried what might happen to her.

But one day, Bopha was gone. Simply disappeared. Mary heard nothing for weeks, and for weeks she couldn't eat or sleep. Friends and neighbors told Mary that Bopha was probably dead. "I died, too," Mary said.

Later, Mary received shocking news. A neighbor reported that a friend had actually seen Bopha alive – But she was hundreds of miles away, across the border in Thailand...

And locked in a brothel.

It turns out that the people offering to take Bopha for a job peeling shrimp were actually working for sex traffickers.

These sex traffickers preyed upon Bopha's sense of financial obligation to her family and convinced Bopha to go with them without telling her mom.

Soon, like hundreds of thousands of other teenagers in Asia, Bopha found herself transported hundreds of miles from her home sold into a brutal brothel, where she was beaten and forced to submit to repeated rape from customers who paid her owners.

As soon as Mary heard about her daughter, she did what you and I would do – She ran to the police to get their help. But her local police just made excuses – and *demanded money*, money that Mary didn't have.

“We had no money,” Mary said. “We could not do anything.”

“We could not do anything.”

Venus' Story:

And consider the story of Venus. What happens when poor widows like as Venus are abused?

Venus Soko lives in the beautiful country of Zambia in Southern Africa, but hunger and disease and destitution run so rampant that it is hard for someone like me to even imagine it.

Venus has been trying on her own to provide for her children ever since disease took the life of her husband. Together they had operated a couple of small stalls selling food and other items at the market and they managed to bring home food and dignity to the children.

But now with her husband gone, Venus is just one of thousands of widows in Africa who has had her property and her business stolen from her by an aggressor in the community.

In Venus' case, the aggressor has allowed her to keep nothing. For herself, she is down to one single garment, which she has worn for months. There are no more coals for the fire, and no food in the pots. Now she watches with desperation each day as her son literally grows crippled from malnutrition.

Like Mary, she would do anything – but finds she can't do anything on her own, only watch as her son's legs slowly cripple and become useless.

She needs some help.

Like thousands of other widows in Africa, she doesn't need someone to take care of her children; she just needs help getting her property back so she can take care of her children.

7. Interlude – "What does scripture teach us about how to respond to these stories?"

- How do we help the poor in our world – Whether in our backyard or across the globe?
 - » If they're hungry ... we bring food.
 - » If they're homeless ... we provide shelter.
 - » If they get sick ... we provide medical care.
- **If they get abused ... we bring relief and advocacy.** God is clear about this:
 - » Psalm 10:12-18
 - » Micah 6:8
 - » Isaiah 1:17
- You might feel totally overwhelmed by these stories. All too often, it just feels like too much to handle – we think, "What can *I* do?"
- It helps me to recall the feeding of the 5,000.
 - » It was lunchtime, and the thousands who had gathered to listen to Jesus teach were growing hungry. Jesus told the disciples to feed them.
 - » The disciples knew there was not enough food to provide for everyone
 - » But Jesus simply asks ... **What do you have?**
 - What did the disciples have? Two fish and five loaves.
 - "Not enough! How can we feed 5,000 with just this?"
 - » Jesus says: **Give it to me.** And *he* does the miracle. He takes responsibility. *All* he asks us for is *obedience*.

- When we seek justice in the face of *huge* giants of injustice, we give him *our* five loaves and two fish.
 - » When we simply bring Jesus what we have and trust him, he moves in ways beyond what we could ever imagine.
- Our friends at IJM seek to heed this call each day.

8. God moves to protect the oppressed.

Concrete case examples – conclusions.

[We recommend sharing two or three case stories – more are available at www.ijm.org or by e-mailing institute@ijm.org.]

Mary's Story:

You remember the story of Mary? Well, when the staff of IJM heard about her story, through the support of friends like you, IJM was able to help Mary.

In fact, the IJM team was able to follow investigative leads and take a specially trained police contingent across the Thai border to rescue Bopha and to eventually rescue nine other women and children abducted by the same trafficking ring.

IJM was able to prevent the victimization of scores of additional girls by securing the arrest and conviction of the brothel keeper and five traffickers who will spend the next decade in prison instead of selling and raping children.

What matters most to Mary, of course, is that she has her daughter back. In fact, Bopha is being cared for in one of IJM's partner aftercare centers where she is doing well. Bopha receives treatment for her trauma and vocational training for her future.

This is what Bopha's mother told us earlier this year:

“When Bopha was taken, it was very hard for me ... No one believed I would ever get my daughter back. IJM was my backbone, because I could not stand up to this without you. When I learned that IJM and the police had rescued her in Thailand I felt like I was born again. For days, I did not feel like I was walking on land, but floating in the heavens ... She is in a good place and receiving good training. I now have hope for my daughter's future.”

Venus' Story:

And do you remember Venus? As they have done for hundreds of other widows and orphans, the IJM Zambia staff were able to restore Venus' property and help her re-establish her business.

Her little café is now prospering. She is feeding her children and plowing profits back into the business, and can afford rudimentary therapy to help restore the strength of her son's limbs. She does not have to watch her children wither and die as she once did because of thieves in her community.

IJM has placed the law on her side and has trained thousands of community leaders and pastors in Zambia to do the same for vulnerable widows and orphans in their own neighborhoods.

It turns out you don't have to put every criminal in jail – you just have to bring enough aggressors to account to change the calculation in their minds about what they can get away with – and they just don't do it anymore.

This produces sustainable transformation in the community protecting others from injustice.

9. A call to action

- And how is all this possible?
- Because we – all of us – have a God of justice who is passionate about His people! And we are God's plan to bring rescue.
- What can you do?
 - » www.ijm.org– Learn and share with others – *educate, explore, engage*.
 - » Pray for victims of injustice here and around the world – You can become a Prayer Partner with IJM on their Web site.
 - » Pay for the rescue the poor cannot afford – you can become a Freedom Partner with IJM (also on Web site).
 - » Connect with other leaders wanting to make a difference – www.ijminstitute.org
- Remember the 5 loaves and fish
 - » We offer to God what we have...
 - » **God** is the one who does the miracle – not us.
 - » May this humble us – but at the same time, may it encourage us to join in His plan!

10. PRAY



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