

“Justice for All”

Psalm 7

Baxter Exum (#999)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
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Four Lakes Church of Christ



Introduction:

In response to a request from one of our members, I would like to ask that we all turn together this morning to the book of **Psalms**, to **Psalm 7**. In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on **page 861**. Actually, the request was for a sermon on the fact that God hates sin. You would think that this is rather obvious, and yet it is unfortunate that in our society, the distinct line between sin and righteousness has been blurred. Those who do good do not always prosper, and those who do evil many times seem to get away with it. **Psalm 7** deals with a related issue as King David is threatened with injustice. In the end, however, we will be reminded that God does, in fact, hate sin. This morning, then, I would like for us to look together at the concept of justice in **Psalm 7** as we remove the dust that has been placed by our society on that line between what is right and what is wrong.

For many hundreds of years, justice (in Western society) has been pictured as a blindfolded woman holding a sword and a pair of scales. **»PPT»** And the idea is that lady justice is ready to deliver a verdict, but in the process of making the decision, she will not allow herself to be influenced by anything but the evidence. The scales will weigh the evidence, and she will render a verdict without prejudice. As I was doing the research for this morning's lesson, **»PPT»** I also ran across a image of Bucky Badger (perhaps from somewhere in the UW School of Law), and you notice that even here, Bucky is pictured with a blindfold, holding a sword and a pair of scales—although we might be a little concerned that Bucky seems to be holding the blade of the sword (perhaps not the brightest badger on the UW campus)! Nevertheless, we find that blind justice is an ideal going back hundreds of years in many cultures all around the world.

However, we look around us, and it seems that injustice still seems to prevail. Even here in Wisconsin, we sometimes hear stories of people being wrongly convicted and spending many years in prison. Even here in Wisconsin, the guilty sometimes go free. And even when the guilty are convicted, it seems to us that the punishment does not always fit the crime. Sometimes it seems to be too lenient, and sometimes it seems to be too severe. And even apart from the court system, we are still challenged from time to time—an evil coworker gets promoted, a seemingly righteous person loses a job, a CEO runs a company into the ground and is rewarded with millions of dollars. Here in this culture, then, justice is sometimes rather elusive.

And yet in the book of **Psalms**, justice is a *major theme*. The words “*justice, judge, and judgment*” are found a total of at least 53 times. In **Psalm 97:2**, we find that “...*righteousness and justice are the foundation of [God’s] throne.*” And so that we do not allow ourselves to be warped by our culture any more than we already have been, and to remind ourselves that God still hates sin, I would like for us to consider God’s idea of justice in a special situation outlined for us in **Psalm 7**.

»PPT» When we look at the heading of **Psalm 7**, we discover that the Psalm is, “*A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning Cush, a Benjamite.*” What in the world does that mean? Well, a “*shiggaion*” is defined as a “*wild, passionate song.*” In fact, the word goes back to the picture of a drunk man staggering around, and so we have the picture here of David being so upset and so “on fire” about something that he is staggering around—he is almost out of control—and so he is singing this as a “*wild, passionate song.*” What was it that made David so upset? Well, we do not really know. We can make some assumptions based on what we do know, but what we do know is that David had apparently been accused of something.

Before we get into the text itself, I want to point out a little word at the end of **verse 5**—the word “*Selah.*” The word is not actually a part of the poem, but it is more like a musical notation. If you look at the footnote, you notice that it refers to a dramatic pause following a crescendo. I just want to point out that I will not be reading that word; but instead, let us honor that word by actually doing what it says. With that, let’s look together at all **17 verses** of **Psalm 7**...

- ¹ *O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge;
Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me,*
- ² *Or he will tear my soul like a lion,
Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver.*
- ³ *O LORD my God, if I have done this,
If there is injustice in my hands,*
- ⁴ *If I have rewarded evil to my friend,
Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary,*
- ⁵ *Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it;
And let him trample my life down to the ground
And lay my glory in the dust. Selah.*
- ⁶ *Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries,
And arouse Yourself for me;
You have appointed judgment.*
- ⁷ *Let the assembly of the peoples encompass You,
And over them return on high.*
- ⁸ *The LORD judges the peoples;
Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity
that is in me.*
- ⁹ *O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous;*

For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.

¹⁰ *My shield is with God,
Who saves the upright in heart.*

¹¹ *God is a righteous judge,
And a God who has indignation every day.*

¹² *If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.*

¹³ *He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.*

[and now shifting back to the wicked man in verse 14, David says...]

¹⁴ *Behold, he travails with wickedness,
And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood.*

¹⁵ *He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,
And has fallen into the hole which he made.*

¹⁶ *His mischief will return upon his own head,
And his violence will descend upon his own pate. [pāt=crown of his head]*

¹⁷ *I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.*

This morning, I would like for us to consider the godly example of King David when he was threatened with injustice. How did King David react, and what can we learn from how he handled it? How can we remind ourselves that God hates sin?

I. One of the first things we notice (from verses 1-2) is that WE ARE TO AFFIRM OUR TRUST IN GOD. »PPT»

And right away in verse 1, David starts out with a statement honoring God. Even as David was apparently being slandered by one of his enemies, King David put his trust in God and acknowledged that God was his refuge. A refuge is a place we go for safety—the basement during a tornado, high ground during a flood—God is our “*refuge.*” He is our place of safety. God is where we go to be protected from our enemies.

Without that refuge, David realizes (in verse 2), that his enemies would tear him apart like a lion ripping its prey to pieces. But in contrast to that graphic image, David affirms that his trust is in God, “*O Lord my God, in You I have taken refuge.*”

As we apply this to our situation living here in the Madison area, we need to remind each other that our trust is also in God—in the way we think, in the way we make our decisions, in our marriages, in our families, in our finances—in everything, we are to start by putting our trust in God. Do we trust that God’s way is always the best way—regardless of the cost, regardless of how difficult might be—do we trust God? Do we trust the word of God?

Our culture does not think that way. Our culture says, “**How dare you be judgmental!**” Our culture says, “**Put your trust in human reasoning—put your trust in money, put your trust in doctors, put your trust in lawyers, put your trust in government!**” But our culture is wrong. Let us not allow our culture to define what we believe, because above everything—regardless of what people may say about us, we (like King David) are to affirm our trust in God.

II. As we look back at Psalm 7, we see another lesson from King David as he reacted to the threat of injustice, and that is, KING DAVID CAREFULLY REEXAMINED HIS OWN LIFE. »PPT»

And so we find that as King David is being attacked and accused by his enemies, he put his trust in God, and then he took a moment to honestly look at his own life, “**Is there perhaps a *good reason* why I have been accused of something?**” King David, then, takes it to God, and David says, “**If I have done this, then bring it on! Judge me! If I have done these horrible things, then** (as he says at the end of verse 5), **then please, dear Lord, “*...lay my glory in the dust.*”** That is the crescendo of this Psalm. David examines himself and asks God to do the same.

And again, how different this is from the world around us! Today, people try to get out of stuff. Today, people do anything to avoid taking responsibility for sin. They will twist the scriptures, they will look for loopholes, they will try to brush it to the side, they will do anything. But instead, we need to ask ourselves: If God were to bring the world to an end today, would we be accepted into the eternal kingdom, or is there some sin that is separating us from God? Is there something holding us back? If God were to judge our righteousness right now, how would we do? Would God be proud of us, or would we be ashamed? Is there something we need to correct before we face God in judgment? If there is, then let us have the courage to take care of it today! Let us then be in a position where (like King David) we can ask God to look into our hearts and judge us right now!

David, then, looked inside himself and was asking for a righteous judgment. It has been said that before a righteous judge, the innocent have no fear. David, as an innocent man, had no fear. Let us be able to lay down at night and be able to sleep well—knowing that our hearts are clean before God.

III. There is a third reaction David had in the face of possible injustice—we notice in verses 6-11 that KING DAVID HAD THE WISDOM TO TURN IT OVER TO GOD. »PPT»

In other words, King David did not take revenge on his own, but he called on God to make it right. In verse 6, he calls on God to, “**Arise.**” In verse 8, he calls on God for vindication. In verse 10, he calls on God to serve as a “**shield,**” as a God who “**saves the upright in heart.**” And in verse 11, King David refers to God as, “**...a God who has indignation every day.**” The word “**indignation**” refers to anger or rage—even foaming at the mouth—but it is a rage that is justified.

Certainly this is exactly what Paul encouraged in **Romans 12:19**, where he said, *“Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ says the Lord.”* King David, then, shows us what it means to turn a situation over to God.

When we are faced with injustice, then, we are to affirm our trust in God, we are to examine ourselves, we are to turn it over to God.

IV. And as we keep on looking at Psalm 7, we find another idea here as WE ARE TO REALIZE THAT GOD WILL PUNISH SIN. »PPT»

Or, as we keep with our theme for this morning, God is a God of justice. God still hates sin. We look around us, and we might think that people are getting away with it. It may appear that people are not being held accountable. And yet King David realized something in **verses 12-13**, *“If a man does not repent, [God] will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts.”* In other words, we need to realize that God will punish sin.

The same idea is very clearly carried over into the New Testament. In **Matthew 10:26**, Jesus said, *“...there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”* And in **Hebrews 4:13**, the Bible says, *“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”* The Bible teaches that all of us will face God in judgment and will give an account for what we have done. The Bible teaches that we will reap what we sow. The Bible teaches that God will have the last word. Or, going back to the request for this morning’s lesson: God hates sin and will punish those who think they’re getting away with it.

And again, we are living in a time when many are being taught that sin is not really a big deal—that God will ignore sin. But that is not what the Bible teaches. For many years now, we have seen churches and ministers put their stamp of approval on all kinds of immoral behavior. But just because some preacher says we are fine the way we are does not mean that we are fine the way we are. We will not be judged by a preacher, or a church, or by our parents, or by a religious convention, or even by a jury of our peers—nobody’s going to take a vote on it, but we will be judged by the word of God. Human judges sometimes make mistakes, juries sometimes make mistakes—but God is always just. And so when we are faced with the threat of injustice, then, we are to realize that no matter what happens, God will punish sin.

V. As we close our thoughts on Psalm 7, there is one final idea for us to consider here, and that is, WE ARE TO PRAISE GOD. »PPT»

We are to worship the God of righteousness. We are to worship the God of justice. When we face unjust criticism, when we are discouraged by the threat of injustice, the Bible teaches that we are to praise God. Worship has a way of changing the way

we think about things. Worship has a way of changing our priorities. Worship has a way of lifting us up. And certainly that is one of the main reasons why all of us are here this morning. According to David (in **verse 17**), we are to ***“...sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High,”*** which is exactly what we are doing today.

Conclusion:

This morning’s lesson was in response to a request on the fact that ***God hates sin***. I hope we have seen that this morning. But at the same time, I hope we have also seen that God is not a God of hate, but He is a God of justice. In fact, even the most severe verse in this entire Psalm—**verse 12**—is one of the most loving and merciful verses in the entire Bible. In fact, it all boils down to a single word. King David says, ***“If a man does not repent, [God] will sharpen His sword.”*** That one little word makes all the difference in the world! The word ***“if”*** opens up a choice—either we can choose to repent and go through the door of grace, or we can refuse to change our behavior and go through the door of judgment. If we choose to push the word of God to the back of our minds and keep on living the way we are living, if we choose to ignore it, God will sharpen His sword—the bow is already pulled back.

Our mission as Christians is to be consistent with our message so that all people will have the opportunity to avoid the consequences of the fact that God hates sin. For right now, God is extending an invitation. God is inviting all people to turn away from sin. But the invitation will not always be open. There is a time coming when the door will shut. As brother John read for us a few moments ago (from **Hebrews 10:26**), ***“...if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”***

If you are burdened down in sin and need the prayers of the church to help you make that step, we would invite you to let us know about that so we can pray about it together. As was mentioned in the announcements, you can write it down and bring it to the front as we sing the next song. If you are already a Christian and need to prayers of the church to grow stronger in your Christian faith, you can let us know about that, and we can pray about it together. If you are burdened down with some kind of addiction or some other issue, we can pray about that as well.

But on the other hand, if you are not yet a Christian you need to know that God wants us to turn away from sin, we are to confess the name of Jesus as the Son of God, and we are to allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. This is the gospel message. If you have any questions, we would love to study with you right away, but if you know what you need to do and you are ready to do it immediately, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let’s stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org