



Week 3

Feasting on the Righteousness of God

Our God is a judge. He is, in fact, THE JUDGE. And that is a cause of feasting and celebration. We spent last week feasting on the goodness of our God. He revealed Himself to Moses and then to us as a God of compassion, showing mercy and patience and unfailing love to a rebellious and traitorous people.

Read Exodus 34:5-8

Meditating on God's mercy and grace is indeed a feast! How then do we also feast on the verses that don't shy away from God holding the guilty accountable for their sins? Is this feast worthy too? Yes, it is. For Love never lets sin have the last word.

How often have you raged, “That’s not fair!”? It could be addressed at a person, at a situation, at an outcome. We’ve all said it. We’ve all felt it. Injustice stirs something innate in our souls. There is right and there is wrong and we instinctively feel that the wrong should be righted and someone should pay.

The Psalms are full of imprecatory prayers – prayers pleading that the evil be held responsible for what they have done. No mercy! Just plain old punishment. We understand their thinking, though sometimes the vividness of their words can make us cringe.

According to GotQuestions.org:

“An [imprecation](#) is a curse that invokes misfortune upon someone. Imprecatory psalms are those in which the author imprecates; that is, he calls down calamity, destruction, and God’s anger and judgment on his enemies. This type of psalm is found throughout the book. The major imprecatory psalms are [Psalms 5, 10, 17, 35, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 109, 129, 137, and 140.](#)”



Choose two or three of the above Psalms.

What is being asked for in the Psalm?

Who are the enemies?

Who is the Judge being appealed to?

It is important for us to answer that last question. Who is being appealed to? There are times when the wrong undoes us. We must appeal to something or someone. In those times, we either make ourselves the judge, *executing our own sentence*, or we appeal to a judge who has promised to see that justice is done. One places the ball in our court. The other places the ball in the law’s court.

But what do we do when the wrong hasn’t broken a law of the land? When the law that has been broken is the law of love? For that is where most of us live – the wrongs done against us violate God’s law of love, not a civil or criminal law. Is there nowhere to turn for justice for that type of violation? Again we have a choice: take the matter into our own hands and seek our own justice, or pour out our wrong before the throne of grace and leave it in God’s hands. Again, the ball is either in our court, or God’s court. As you may notice, the ball does end up in court! And if we turn to God’s court, do we have the right to make our complaint and give our opinion on what we want to see done?

What we often find is, when we pour out the wrong and leave it with God, it leads us to pray for the one who has wronged us. “For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:30 & 31) It is a sobering thought. And yet, it is also in those times that we feast on the righteousness of our great God.

Why might appealing to God’s justice also lead us to pray for our perpetrators?

The hunger for justice is powerful. It is part of the Christians' mission to seek justice. And in times when the wrong can feel so enduring and overwhelming, the Lord gives us a place to go with our cries.



Jesus' death and resurrection were God's greatest display of His heart for His people, and a magnificent display of triumphant judgement. The guilty were not excused. Sin was punished. In the person of Jesus, as He hung on the cross for the sin of His people, justice and mercy kissed. Justice was done. And mercy triumphed! There can never be a cry that God was unfair or soft on sin. He was not. His Son paid the debt that justice demanded be paid, so we would not have to. And so, Believers, feast!

Ponder John Newton's poem:

The Cross

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear;
'Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood;
Who fixed his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

Sure, never to my latest breath
Can I forget that look:
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And helped to nail him there.

Alas I knew not what I did,
But now my tears are vain:
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain.

A second look he gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I'll die that thou mayest live."

Thus, while his death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
(Such is the mystery of grace)
It seals my pardon too.

With pleasing grief and mournful joy,
My spirit now is filled,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by him I killed.

The poem is an important reminder to us, that **the only one** who has never sinned, **the only one** who has never been a perpetrator, is Jesus. Even as we rightly seek justice, there is a deep humility that should fill our souls. **Only Jesus cannot relate to being a sinner.** The rest of us can make no such claim.

And what of those who refuse to accept God's provision for sin? They will bear the penalty in their own flesh. And, once again, justice will be served. The cry of, "No fair!" will again be silenced. Justice will be done, all of the wrongs held accountable – either at the cross or at the judgement seat before the Righteous Judge.

And the evil that tempted this all into place? The serpent of the garden has also been judged.

Read John 12:31

Who is being judged here?

When does that judgment occur?

So you see, there is feasting which comes from pondering God's righteousness. Acknowledging our longing for justice, we turn our eyes to our Holy God, who promises that He will repay any wrong done against His people. As the psalmists who wrote the imprecatory psalms trusted, there is no wrong that will not be atoned for. They did not have to avenge the wrong done to them, knowing that, in time, God Himself would judge between themselves and their enemies. And God would avenge what needed to be avenged.

Are we at the finish line, then? Leaving the matter in God's hands, is there nothing left for us to do? Not exactly. We do have a part to play: We work for justice, and we forgive. Forgive? Yes, forgive. Forgiveness is costly – it asks the one who is wronged to bear the cost. We can only understand that when we look to Jesus, our sin bearer, who is deeply familiar with the cost of OUR sin. We can only forgive knowing God will avenge the wrong.

Jesus never flinches about how costly forgiveness is to the one doing the forgiving. Yet, He knows that He's inviting us into freedom, when He tells us to forgive. Choosing not to forgive always hinders love. Our hearts and our relationships are deeply affected by withholding forgiveness. Period. Frankly, lack of forgiveness wars against our souls in ways we can't fully understand. As counterintuitive as it may seem, forgiving those who wrong us brings us life. The wrong is not given the power to hijack our story any longer because the love of Christ has been poured into our hearts and has the last word.

Thus, we find ourselves back at the beauty and relief of forgiveness, and the goodness and mercy of our great God. The whole picture is held together by His unfailing love and righteousness. And so we feast!

Let's end our time by singing!

Is He Worthy by Andrew Peterson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olahc83Kvp4>

Lord I Need You by Matt Maher <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e37m3I5eH8g>

Great are You Lord by Casting Crowns <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZqV6i98SkA>

Other resources:

Movies with strong relational forgiveness themes:

As We Forgive: the Story of Rwanda's Redemption

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Two Popes

Again, you are invited to read the book of Romans from The Message, if you have not done so already. You will be refreshed.