

True Justice...

“If someone strikes you on the right cheek. turn to him the other also.”

-- Matthew 5:39b

This past Sunday we found ourselves dealing once with some of the more controversial things that Jesus taught. In the last few verses of Matthew 5 we are presented with some of the more challenging aspects of Jesus’ preaching that, taken together, paint a pretty vivid picture of what we might describe as *true justice*.

Now we would all agree that this world needs justice! Swift, strong and sure justice that will whip things back into shape, and right all the wrongs that we are forced to live with each day. But if there is one thing that this passage makes abundantly clear it is this; justice begins with us. True justice is not something that an institution or legal code can give us, true justice must be won by ourselves (often at a great price, it must be said) – and this will require some work on our part.

But this is not an easy truth to hear. We would prefer it if justice was given by someone, or offered by an institution, rather than hard-won by ourselves. We like the kind of justice that means simply walking into a courtroom or an office and demanding that restitution be made... But if we’re honest with ourselves we will admit that this kind of justice hardly ever settles the matter or rights the wrong. No, the only kind of justice that is true, that makes a difference and settles an issue is the kind of justice that Jesus presents us with in this passage from Matthew – it is the kind of justice that will demand sacrifice and work on our part, it is the kind of justice that must begin with us.

If we want to win this kind of true justice there are at least three things that we will need to become better at: *Firstly, surrendering...* In order to win true justice for any wrong that we have suffered you and I must learn to surrender our case to God. Let God, who works all things for our good, even the bad stuff that happens to us, handle the matter. Turn the other cheek and trust God for the outcome. Andrew Murray once said: “God is ready to accept full responsibility for the life fully yielded to him.” *Secondly, giving...* We must develop the ability to give graciously, generously and indiscriminately. True justice is reserved for those instances where we are willing to give away whatever was taken from us. Not because we don’t hold those things dear, but because we realize that they were never really our possessions, only gifts. *Thirdly, loving...* In his book Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis wrote, “Do not waste your time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less.” Justice can only be won by those who are willing to learn to love the offender – anything else would only be revenge, not justice.

Food for Thought:

H.L. Mencken, the respected journalist from the early to mid 1900’s once said: “Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice.” Because true justice demands a price to be paid by all – not just those who have committed the wrong, but also by those against whom it was committed.