

## Devotion for Week of October 16, 2022

### Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We've looked at several parables lately having to do with justice – the Dishonest Manager, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Widow and the Unjust Judge, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. It's not a New Testament concept. In Hebrew, the antidote for evil is justice. The word in Hebrew is *mishpat*, and it is in the Old Testament about 400 times. At times, the Bible shows a sharp contrast between evil (*ra*) and justice (*mishpat*). Look at these quotes:

"Truth is missing: anyone turning from evil (*ra*) is plundered. The Lord looked and was upset at the absence of justice (*mishpat*)." – Isaiah 59:15

"The wicked are fat and sleek, and there is no limit to their wicked (*ra*) deeds. They refuse to provide justice (*mishpat*) to orphans and deny the rights of the poor." Jeremiah 5:28

"Hate evil (*ra*), love good; maintain justice (*mishpat*) in the courts." Amos 5:15

About one-fourth of the verses containing *mishpat* also include the word *tsedaqah*, which means righteousness. Isaiah 33:5 says "The Lord is exalted; he lives on high, filling Zion with justice (*mishpat*) and righteousness (*tsedaqah*)." And of course, there is the famous quote from Amos 5:24, "But let justice (*mishpat*) roll down like waters, and righteousness (*tsedaqah*) like an ever-flowing stream."

In the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector that we looked at this past Sunday, the tax collector, who was so bereft at his sin that he couldn't pray for anything but for God to be merciful to him, a sinner, was the one who went home from the temple "justified." The Pharisee received what God would consider justice – he was not "justified." When there is justice, those who practice it are considered righteous by God. When we practice justice, we are living rightly according to God's statements about righteousness in the Old Testament, and Jesus' examples that he gave in the parables he told in the New Testament. The two concepts are wedded – you cannot be considered righteous by God if you are unjust. Living rightly means living together in community where all are valued, and justice is practiced.

This ancient concept is how God's people survived through centuries of strife. Practicing justice is what makes us realize that we are connected to each other as God's beloved children. I hope this week you are able to see justice in your life and to recognize that God considers you a righteous member of his kingdom.

*Jeanne*