



WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

Nehemiah | 11.2.25

Libin Abraham

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Libin Abraham 0:00

Last week, we were in Nehemiah four, and by now, the people of God have begun rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah has left Susa. He's in Jerusalem, and they're doing a beautiful work. In chapter four, we saw all of the kinds of external oppositions that the people of God were facing, from public ridicule to Army alliances that were formed on every side of Jerusalem to bring confusion, and all of that brought doubt and fear into the people of God. And yet they endured all of that. We saw that they contended in prayer, they took wise actions. They carried a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. They were building and they were battling building and they were battling, and the people stood shoulder to shoulder, working in this mission that God had called them to. It's a beautiful thing. But then you flip a chapter and you begin to wonder, What in the world happened? Because in chapter five, they're not fighting against external oppositions. They're now fighting internal injustice. The people who were standing shoulder to shoulder have now turned against each other and are oppressing one another and unjust to each other. Injustice has been a part of the human story ever since sin entered the picture, and tragedy after tragedy, people were exploited and taken advantage of great evil was done. And it could be that you're here today, and you have been a person who experienced personal injustice, or you have felt the effects of institutionalized injustice, whatever the case may be, and all around the world, there is injustice still happening today, whether it be kids who are hungry or victims of war or ethnic and gender violence or people are killed because of their gender or their or their ethnicity. It could be the global persecution of Christianity, which is a great injustice or political or governmental corruption that happens in our day. It could be a number of things, and the list just goes on and on, and it should cause us to stop and ask, what does justice require of us as a faith community, as people of faith, as followers of Jesus, whether in our life or in our community or around the world. What does justice require of us? Well, I think Nehemiah chapter five helps us address that. The Roadmap we're going to take for this chapter as simple as three things, we're going to look at, the situation reaction and the solution. So the situation, reaction and solution, so we're going to go by pretty quickly. So follow with me in Nehemiah, chapter five, verse one, look at the situation happening to the people of God. There was a widespread outcry from the people and their wives against their Jewish countrymen. Some were saying, we our sons and our daughters are numerous. Let us get grain so that we can eat and live. Others are saying we are mortgaging our fields, vineyards and homes to get grain during the famine. Still, others were saying we have borrowed money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. We and our children are just like our countrymen and their children, yet we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters are already enslaved, but we are powerless because our fields and vineyards belong to others. What a dire situation we just read about. So here's a mixture of things happening. First of all, there is a famine in the land. There's a famine in the land, most likely because the people who are tilling the agricultural fields or the vineyards, they've all left the fields, and they're now a part of the work to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. So without workers, there's not going to be enough grain. So it's a time of harvest. There isn't enough grain to go around, so there is a famine in the land. Not only is there famine, there's high taxation. The government of Persia, the king of Persia, is charging up to 40% at this time from those in Jerusalem. I don't know if it's comforting or uncomfortable to know that high taxes have always been a part of human history, and so high tax, verse four says we're having to borrow money mortgage our fields, take collateral to pay the king's tax. So when you can't afford to pay tax, what do you do? You take out debt, massive debt, and that's what's happening here? People are having to take out debt, and those who have the means to lend money from their own people group, they're charging high interest because they saw the misfortune of their fellow brothers and sisters as an opportunity to get rich. So they're charging high tax, so you got famine, high debt, high taxation, all of it leading to severe oppression, the kind of oppression where you have to sell your sons and daughters into slavery just to pay people back. This is the people of God in Nehemiah five. So that's the situation we find ourselves in. So

then how does Nehemiah respond? What is his reaction? And I think his reaction helps us come to terms of, how do we as people of God, as people of faith, respond to the injustice of our day? His first reaction is righteous anger. Righteous anger. Look at verse six, I became extremely angry when I heard their outcry and their complaints. Do you know that it's okay to be angry about the right stuff? It's even holy to be righteously angry about the things like injustice, because Injustice anywhere is sin. What injustice does is it dishonors God by taking advantage of image bearers, those who are made in God's image. It exploits and buys or sells or oppresses those people who have been made in God's image. And therefore injustice dishonors God and it is right, like Nehemiah is to be extremely angry, this righteous anger towards the things of injustice. Now, there is a kind of anger that leads to sin. The scriptures talk about it, and that kind of anger is vengeance and rage. It's selfish, it's fleshy. It's motivated by self centeredness. But this is not that. This is a kind of righteous anger, which can be defined as an appropriate response to anything that is offensive to the holiness of God. And that's what this is. Nehemiah sees something that is not in alignment with God's holiness, His character, His love, and he is led to respond with righteous anger. So he became extremely angry at the sight of injustice. Now we know this is righteous anger because it is paired with, second of all, careful consideration. He doesn't lash out at what he sees. He doesn't respond in the flesh. But verse seven says, After seriously considering the matter, he's extremely angry, but he takes time to carefully consider the matter. He's angry, but also calculated. So he takes a moment to assess his own heart, to weigh out his own emotions. What Nehemiah does is he puts a distance between his anger and his response, which is a good idea. That's why you write that email, because you're so mad, and they say, save it in the draft folder. Put a little bit of time and space between your feeling of anger and your feeling and the response to it. So Nehemiah says, Okay, I feel this way, but I'm not going to be controlled by my anger. And that's when sin often happens. That's when anger leads to sin, when we respond and are controlled by our anger. But rather, Nehemiah feels the holy indignation, but he carefully considers his actions. He puts time and space to ask yourself, why do I feel this way? Am I in the flesh? Do I simply want to be heard, or is this helpful? You can feel the anger and not be controlled by it. So there's holy anger, there's careful consideration, and the third response of Nehemiah is courageous confrontation. Courageous confrontation. Look at verse seven. After seriously considering the matter, I accused the nobles and officials, saying to them, each of you is charging his countrymen interest. So I called a large assembly against them and said, we have done our best to buy back our Jewish countrymen who were sold to foreigners, but now you sell your own countrymen, and we have to buy them back. They remained silent and could not say a word. Now here's why these words are really courageous. Nehemiah is speaking to power. He's speaking to those in positions of influence. They are the nobles and officials of his day. And what's also amazing is he needs their support to finish the wall. He needs their backing. He needs their agreement. And yet, when he sees the sin of injustice, his need of help from them does not hinder him from speaking truth and confronting the sin of injustice.

Libin Abraham 9:52

Nehemiah's righteous anger, his careful consideration, his courageous confrontation, all of it is anchored in godly conviction and. Godly, holy conviction. Why does he feel this way? Look at verse nine. Then I said, what you are doing isn't right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God and not invite the reproach of our foreign enemies or foreign nations guys? Shouldn't we be the people who are walking in awe and reverence and fear of our God and not invite the reproach of the foreign enemies? This is where his convictions are based off Nehemiah knows that to walk in the fear of God is to live a life that is consistent with the character of God. What you see about our God all throughout is that our God is a just God. He is a righteous king. In fact, Psalm 99 verse four, says it like this, the mighty king speaking of your God, My God, our mighty king loves justice. You have established fairness. You have administered justice and righteousness in Jacob. Let me just tell you, in a generation that loves and pursues justice, that generation should also long for the God of the Bible, because from cover to cover, we see that God is just. God is righteous, and you can't have true justice without a heart that is aligned with the righteousness of the God of the scriptures. So Nehemiah knew that our actions are not reflecting the very nature and character of God, so he caused people to live in fear of this God, in awe and respect of him. But secondly, he is motivated by the fear of God because he knows that what they are doing is explicitly against what God has spoken against, what God had revealed about himself and how where they are to live. For instance, you see in passages like Deuteronomy, 23 verse 19, where it says, do not charge your brother interest, or in silver food or anything that can earn interest. And here people are charging what high interest on their own brethren. When God specifically told them, Don't charge interest, and when they can't pay back the interest, they're being sold into slavery, when God said to them in passages like Leviticus, 25 verse 39 if your brother among you becomes destitute and sells himself to you, you must not force him to do slave labor. Let him stay with you as a hired worker or temporary resident. He may work for you until the year of Jubilee, God says, Look, if someone finds himself in a hard spot, you hire them, give them the chance to pay off the debt. But they're not your slaves. They're workers, and once they've paid off the debt, let them go. Sin Nehemiah is so worked up about what he's seen because he

has a holy conviction about who God is and what God had made explicitly clear to his people. And so when he sees a violation of this, he says, Guys, we need to walk in fear and reverence of God. So as we engage in the work of justice in our life or around our world, our highest convictions are not from political ideologies or social theories or cultural consensus. Our highest convictions are from the infallible word of God, amen. God has revealed what is true, and for all of eternity that will be true. God has determined what is good and what is evil, and that which He has called good is good, and that which He has called Evil is evil. So our convictions, both our courage and our compassion, is anchored in the scriptures, and we live wanting to honor him and respond to His Word, what he has revealed in the written word, and how he's embodied those truths in the living word. Who is Jesus the Christ? So this is where Nehemiah finds his conviction in what God has said. Next we have the solution. So the situation, reaction and solution, Nehemiah works toward a solution that is right, just and even costly to him. The solution begins with correction, because the solution isn't just about a change of heart. It has to be about a change of action. So verse 10, Nehemiah says, even I as well as my brothers and my servants, have been lending them money and grain. Please, let's stop charging this interest. Return their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses to them immediately, along with the percentage of the money, grain, new wine and fresh oil. Know that you have been assessing them. So he says, Look, you've been unjust. So please stop it. Stop it. Repentance is not just the change of intention. It is the change of one's direction, direction of action, direction of motive, direction of life. So he says, immediately return what you've stolen and stop doing works of injustice. So there's correction. Second of all, there's accountability. Accountability. Nehemiah Five, Verse 12, they responded, We will return these things and require nothing more from them. We will do as you suck it. That's kind of a handshake. That's the chat in the group text. All right, we got a thumbs up emoji, but Nehemiah knows, okay. Just because you said you're going to do this doesn't mean you're actually going to do it. So this is a bold man. Look at what he does next. So I said, So I summoned the priest and made everyone take an oath to this. I also shook the folds of my robe, and said, May God likewise shake from this house and property everyone who doesn't keep this promise, may he be shaken out and have nothing. Whoa. He said, Your private agreement is good, but the way you have accountability is through this public oath. The solution involved correction, accountability. Lastly, we see through Nehemiah, the solution involved a personal commitment, a deep personal commitment to the works of justice. Verse 14, Nehemiah says, Furthermore, from the day King Artaxerxes appointed me to be their governor in the land of Judah from the 20th year until this 32nd year. So 12 years have gone by, I and my associates never ate from the food allotted to the governor. The governors who preceded me had heavily burdened the people, taking from them food and wine as well as a pound of silver, the subordinates also oppressed the people, but because of the fear of God, I didn't do this. I didn't do this. Instead, I devoted myself to the construction of this wall, and all my subordinates were gathered there for the work we didn't buy land. Nehemiah personally committed to what does justice and righteousness look like for him in his sphere of influence, in his work? What does it look like for him? The next verse talks about how he's having to host 150 people around his table. Even then he said, I didn't burden some I didn't burden the people by having to give me all the food that was rightly allotted to me, because it would have been overly burdensome. So I gave up some of my conveniences. I gave up some of my rights to care for those who felt the burden of that. And here's what I want you to walk away from this portion of the text. We may not be able to solve injustice everywhere we ought to care about it, that that might not be in our control, but as far as it depends on us, we can be personally committed to justice and fairness and righteousness, to those in our life, to those who experience us and are treated by us, to those under our care and under our influence when we have a say, we can be personally committed to treating people as worthy image bearers of God and letting the heart of God's justice exude from our words and our attitudes and from our life. We can be personally committed to this act in this course of justice. And what I love about this church, what I so appreciate, and what I see in us as a community, and what I see about you as individuals. This is a church who centered around the Justice heart of God, the just heart of God. In fact, our local outreach is centered around, how do we care well for homelessness and hunger issues and human trafficking in our city, because there's still exploitation where kids are bought and sold and people don't have enough food, and so today, many of you brought food, and after the service, there's a food store happening to care for those who are living with food insecurity. That's what we get to do together. Just last year, we were able to serve 440 families in our community, especially in the summer months and Christmas months. Last year, we took care of 126 families within our church who were going through a really hard time through our benevolence fund. We wanted to make sure that we were showing up for each other. That's the kind of church you are and we are, but we don't just do that collectively. You do it as individuals.

Libin Abraham 19:51

Some of you run organizations where justice and fairness and righteousness is a core part of how you lead. Some of you write policies that would. Care for and protect the most vulnerable. Those of you that I know in this body, you have a work with senior adults to make sure they don't fall prey to some of the scams out there, because you want to make sure they're

taken care of. I know a family in our church, their job is to start affordable, healthy grocery stores in low income and minority communities. That's amazing. One of my friends, Mark and Christie, just this week, they realized that their Barber was about to get evicted. By the way, he works two jobs, so this guy who works two jobs was about to get evicted. So they put out a text to all of the guys at the gym and all of their friends, hey, Saturday morning, we're gonna buy breakfast. We're gonna hang out, come and get a haircut for my barber, because we want to do whatever it takes to keep him from living on the streets. That's what you are, and you want to thank God that's the kind of church you're a part of. Amen, let's praise God for that. Here is why that matters and that's worth celebrating. The ethics of Justice are not apart from the gospel. It is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We don't have beliefs or ethics that are deeply intertwined together. And as long as God keeps us on the earth, let us be the kind of church that embodies the heart of God's justice and compassion and righteousness to the world. All right, the next few minutes, I want to invite my friend and our church member, Dr Darrell Bock. Dr Darrell Bock, to join me on stage. So would you give a warm venture? Welcome to Daryl. Come on up, Darrell. Now, he has just come back from Korea, and so I don't know if you're fully awake. He just got here last night. So Darryl and Sally have been amazing leaders in our church and members for a while. Daryl is also a world renowned scholar and theologian currently at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is the Executive Director of Cultural Engagement and senior professor of research of New Testament studies. And if you read a book, if you read a commentary about Luke or Acts, or pretty much any of the New Testament epistles, he's part epistles, he's probably wrote that or co authored that. So there, we're just grateful for you and just your influence in the church and in the world, because God's opened up so many doors to speak about the church and how we engage, especially with issues of justice around the world and the role of the church to be missional in this space that we're in. So start us off by talking to us about how justice is not a social idea. It's not a political idea. It is actually a biblical idea rooted from the Scripture. So would you begin there?

Speaker 1 22:31

One of the things I love about theology is it's not calculus. So let me ask you a simple question. All right, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jesus, do they predate Karl Marx? Yes, yeah. I mean, just by a few, just Yeah, a little detail, right? And yeah, and justice is a topic of the Scripture, which means you can talk about justice, you can talk about how we treat one another, how we relate to one another, and we're not talking about politics and ideology. We're talking about how God made us, I tell people, the Gospel starts, not in Genesis three, but in Genesis one. God has made us in His image. He's made us for dignity. He's made a point out of our lives, and we are made to collaborate together. The place where the gospel starts is in how God has made us, and He made us in His image. He made us, male and female to cooperate and collaborate together. I like to tell people to review the story of Adam and Eve. You know, Adam was all by himself, poor guy. Okay, so God said, I'm going to make you a help meet. All right, help me. By the way, is not a weak word. God describes himself as a help meet. And so he said, I'm going to make you a help meet. And so remember, the creation was paraded in front of Adam, one after another, one after another, and this is the summary of that, no, no, no, no, no. And then God made Eve, and Adam went, Whoa, man, and the gospel got and the creation got promoted from good to very good because we were designed to make the world flourish. We were all designed to be Hummers. We're supposed to make the world hum, and the world doesn't hum anymore. In case you didn't notice, that's where Genesis three comes in. But Genesis one is the starting point, and the gospel is designed to take us back to Genesis, one. Now, how did God take us there? God took us there because he had empathy and compassion. God, being rich in mercy, made us alive together in Christ, that's Ephesians. Two. You. In fact, one of the most important verses that shows that justice and the gospel go together is in the second part of Ephesians, two where it says, God took Jew and Gentile and he made us into one. He took a strange people, Jews and Gentiles didn't get along in the first century, that's breaking news, and he brought us together, and he made us one. He said, I'm going to take a strange peoples, people who do not get along, and I'm going to make them family. I'm going to make them into one thing. That's the second part of Ephesians, two right after talking about salvation is by grace, through faith. And so God has adopted us. The question is, God has adopted one another. And how did he do that? Well, that's John 3:16, you know that verse, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever should believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. It's the only sentence where I use the word whosoever I want to shorten that for you, so that you get it, because this is the heart of God. God so loved the world that He gave period that's the kind of church we're supposed to be, because we're supposed to model the character of God. So when we model the justice of God, which the Bible talked about long before the political ideologies that we debate, and when we talk about what the gospel is to bring people together, strange people together at a corporate level, to testify to the fact that God is in the business of making us all and bringing us all together. When we make Christianity what it is, which is a non tribal religion for a tribal world, and when we show that, we automatically send a message that's in contrast to what's going on the world. You know the worship service that we had earlier, I poked living during the during the first service, and I said, look at the variety of ethnicities that are up there. Isn't

that beautiful Romans. From Romans I'm not ashamed of the gospel to Revelation four and five and Revelation seven, every tribe and every nation. That's who we're called to be. That's what we're called to show and that involves that only involves righteousness and the gospel that involves justice and empathy and concern.

Libin Abraham 27:11

So Micah six, verse eight, an Old Testament, anchoring verse mankind, He has told each of you what is good and what is it that the Lord requires of you to act justly, to love faithfulness and to walk humbly with your God, then you get the New Testament. Tell us about the parable of the Indianapolis, 500 that is in the New Testament.

Speaker 1 27:31

You guys didn't know that parable is in the New Testament the Indiana. The Parable of the Indiana is 501 of my favorite parables in life of Jesus. It's actually the Good Samaritan, a lawyer, asked a question about, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He talked about how we relate to one another, how we interact with one another, and then the lawyer, thinking that he was able to do this, asked this question because lawyers never know when to stop asking questions. No offense, that's right, my son's a lawyer, so that was for you. Stephen, anyway, so, so he asked this question, so who is my neighbor? Now he isn't really asking who is my neighbor? He's asking another question. The question he's asking is, who's not my neighbor? He's asking the question to exclude people from his concern. So Jesus told the parable, what I call the Indianapolis 500 let me tell you that man fell among thieves, left for dead. Priest comes around the corner. You think, oh, it's a priest. Surely he's going to help. Goes right by the guy as fast as he can. Levi comes around the corner, looks at guy left for dead. Surely he's going to help. No man goes right by the guy. That's the guy in second place. Okay, Samaritan in third place comes around the corner, sees the guy who needs help. What does he do? He goes, stops eight verbs to describe what the Samaritan did to help the man who fell among thieves and Jesus asked this question, who proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the thieves, who proved to be that neighbor, and the lawyer who's asked this question, who's sharp and gets the point of the story? Can't even say the Samaritan. Now, what he says is the one who showed mercy, because Jesus' point is, the question is not, who is my neighbor? The issue is to be a neighbor, and the issue is to be a neighbor and to realize that neighbors sometimes come in surprising packages. That's the point of the passage. And what took us there as the lawyers answered the one who showed mercy, without empathy, without mercy, without a movement towards justice and injustice in the world. We don't get there. In fact, it was God who was rich in mercy, who reached out and saved us when we came to him. So we cannot be in a Christian movement that. And there are some Christians who are saying this today, that empathy doesn't matter, because empathy is the very virtue and emotion that God showed when he reached out and touched us. Empathy is the very character of God that we're supposed to exemplify to a world, world that needs to be drawn towards God, not pushed away from him, because people who do not know God are not the enemy. They are actually the goal. God said, go into the world and make disciples, not go into the church and make disciples. And so when I meet someone who's not like me, who doesn't believe maybe the way I do about God, I'm not supposed to put I'm supposed to figure out, how can I draw them to God? I'm supposed to never forget this, that when my back was turned to God, well, I didn't care about what he was doing or saying God, because he was rich in mercy and had empathy, reached out and touched me. God, because he was rich in mercy and had empathy, sent his Son to die for me. God so loved the world that He gave so that I can sit in the place when I meet someone who doesn't know God and replicate what God did to me for them. That's our calling, and that's what leads to justice, not political ideology, not the other, not the changing of laws, but the changing of hearts. Amen.

Libin Abraham 31:28

Isn't that good? So in Nehemiah five, verse nine, he gets worked up when he sees the injustice being he uses the term, shall we not walk in fear of our Lord and not be a reproach to our foreign enemies or nations, because the covenant people of God were always to have a missional reach into the nations by the way they lived, and so injustice within the community of faith was now compromising the very mission that God had chosen them for. So speak to us about our mission as a church, and how actually our engagement in the world and engagement in justices actually becomes a an opportunity for mission, and how that can be compromised. And I grieve when the church has injustices within it and there's all kinds of issues and harassments and children being abused like that, that Mars our witness to the world, and so speak to us about dealing with injustice in a way that is a missional outreach to the world.

Speaker 1 32:29

Well, the whole point about justice is, justice is an expression of the mission, because it shows the heart of God. You know,

when you share with someone and you say, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life that you know that you know that used to be when we do evangelism. That was one of the ways we used to start off as God loves you and as well. How does the person who doesn't know God? You know, 30% of our population is the are called religious nones. That's not n u n s, that's N O N, E S, means they don't have a religious phone in their body. How can they know that God cares for them, unless people in the church show that God cares for them, how can they know that? And so, so when we share Christ with people, we're actually in the business of creating categories that the people we're sharing with don't have. You don't think about this, but it's true. Let me give you one example, the person of Jesus Christ. You say Jesus Christ is the Son of God, pretty important to the Gospel story, right? Jesus the Son of God? Probably important? Yeah. I think the key part of what you teach and preach on a regular basis. 100 and 17 billion people have walked the earth in the history of humanity. That's according to Google. I asked Google, I asked Google, how many people have walked the earth in the history? 100 and 17 billion people. How many of them could credibly claim to be the creator, guard incarnate, one that's an exceptional category. You're talking to people about someone who is in an exceptional category. How in the world do you get them to create a category they don't have? You do it relationally. You do it by how you serve them. You do it by how you engage with them. You do it by how you interact with them. And show that God cares so unless I have a missional element coming alongside the justice element, and the justice element says shows God cares about all people, because they're all made in the image of God. Unless I put those two things together, and we've allowed our history to pull them apart when God has joined together, let no man put us under put those two things together. We show how God cares. We show what God is about. In the Gospel, we show through our mercy and our empathy and our service and our outreach that people are not the enemy, but the goal. Ephesians 6:12 which is the cultural war. Passage in the New Testament says, For our battle is not, not, not, not. That was, in fact. Critic against flesh and blood, but it's against the spiritual forces in the world. My favorite Greek word is in this passage, the word cosmocrat. If you think a bureaucrat is bad, you should meet a cosmocrat. And there's this spiritual battle only this spiritual forces work incognito. Nobody knows that they're there. Most people who you will reach out to with the gospel don't even think they have a problem, and yet you're on a rescue mission. It's one thing to rescue someone who's kidnapped and knows it. It's another thing to try and rescue someone who's in trouble and they have no clue. That's our calling, and the only way we do that is by how we show that relationally. The only way we show it relationally is to care about things like justice and injustice. And the only way we can be the mission of the church is to show that God's in the vision, in the business of bringing together a strange people and making them one. God has adopted us. The question is, as we adopted one another.

Libin Abraham 36:06

So Nehemiah, he's moated towards justice because of the fear of God. And we are also commanded in Scripture to be moted towards justice because of the grace of God. So walk with walk through just First Peter three, and just how the grace of God fuels us to engage with people, to be a messenger of hope in this

Speaker 1 36:24

world. So one of the most important passages on engagement is first, Peter, chapter three, and you can see it on the screen. It says, Set Christ apart in your heart. Regard Christ, the Lord is holy. Be ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. I tell people, Peter had an opportunity to summarize our faith in one word, and he chose the word hope. If I were to go out and ask most people, or even if I had asked you before I said this, give me one word to summarize, to summarize Christianity, you probably would say maybe Jesus or the cross or forgiveness or love, take your pick. Hope probably wouldn't even be in the top five. But Peter picks the word hope, because we're supposed to be about hope. We're supposed to be prepared to talk about the hope that we have. The gospel is ultimately about hope. It's about the hope of reconnecting with the living God in the way that he made us. That's why the gospel starts in Genesis one, and so when we do that well, we are to offer hope. Now there certainly is a challenge in the Gospel, because the gospel does deal with sin, but if we only deal with challenge and we don't deal with hope, we've actually never offered the gospel. And so I ask myself, when I look at how the church engages with the world, how much is the signal that we send a message of challenge and challenge alone, and how much is the signal that we send a message of hope and the opportunity to be reconnected to the living God. And that's not the only thing that's going on in the past. It's the second thing that's going on the past. Is what it goes on to say next, and that is that when we offer this defense of the hope that is in us, we are supposed to do it with meekness and respect. Tone matters in how we engage. I can say the right thing, think the right thing, believe the right thing, but if I do it in the wrong way, I'm wrong. And so I ask myself, when I listen to the signals that the world, that the gospel of the gospel that the church, sends out into the world. Am I hearing something that reflects meekness and respect, or am I hearing something else? Our tone matters, and I've already said the third part that's important to this patch

is coming a few passages later, because when the text asks, Why do we do it this way, it says we do it because Jesus Christ died the just for the unjust. And then you think the past is going to go on and say, to bring them to God. Only there's a curve ball in the passage. Passage says to bring you to God. You're never supposed to forget where you came from when your back was turned on God when you weren't interested in what he had to offer. God tapped you on the shoulder by his initiative, by his empathy, by his caring, to draw you to Himself when you meet someone who doesn't know God, you're in the same position that God was in in relationship to you when your back was turned to God. So you're called upon to imitate and emulate God and how he handled you. Never forget where you came from. And when we do this well and we do this right, we end up in a room in which people of every tribe and every nation know each other, get along with one another and serve alongside one another. I tell people, when we get to heaven, I'm probably gonna be standing next to someone who's different than me, and I'm going to appreciate it. Why can't we model that today?

Libin Abraham 39:51

That's good, amen. So he who was just died for the unjust, the greatest and just. This was against who Jesus. It was the just injustice of humanity, our sin, the cosmic forces, and yet he rose from the grave. So I think when I think about the injustice of our day, we actually engage it with resurrection, hope, and it is an invitation to be, to be the church that is more alive, more hope, giving more LIGHT, shining, more gospel preaching, because it is the only message that can reconcile a broken world. Last question for you, Darryl, sometimes the issues of we need to get to this, the last service, so you guys are in a bonus, bonus question, yeah, sometimes the issues of what is just and unjust? That's clear. It's always complicated, but sometimes complicated, but it's clear, other times it's not clear. And as a country, we have lost the ability to have healthy conversations about things that matter, what is just, what is unjust, because we live in a polarized world where we can't really even listen to each other anymore. So how do you engage in a meaningful, healthy conversation in the midst of a polarized society, in like one minute, if you could just

Speaker 1 41:09

James 119 and 20 says, we're supposed to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve The righteousness of God, and there's a lot of anger in our world. The world has a variation on James one. It's the exact reverse. I'm going to be quick to speak, slow to hear, and quick to anger, because my anger lets you know what I really think we've got to become better listeners. We've got to become better listeners. How do I know when I'm listening? I know when I'm listening when I hear something I disagree with and I'm forming my rebuttal, I'm not listening then I'm ready for a debate and not a conversation when I hear something that I don't agree with, rather than responding with the rebuttal of what my response is going to be, maybe a few questions, asking why the person thinks that way, and getting to know what's really going on deep inside of them is a better way to set up the conversation that I need to have, because I really can't engage in good assessment unless I really know what I'm really talking about and unless I engage what I call slow thinking, in other words, understanding what my conversation is really about with the person I'm engaged with, rather than moving quickly to assessment, maybe if I do a better job of listening, I can have a better conversation. I tell people, when your doctrinal meter goes off in a conversation, put it on mute. Okay, don't turn it off. You're not going to turn it off. Anyway. It's going to scream at you. The tilt button goes off. But don't think about your rebuttal. Think about understanding why and where someone's coming, where they are. You may find a value that they have, that you share with them, that you can connect with, and you can go, You know what? I share that value, but I apply it in a different way, and now you're in a different mode entirely, into how you have conversation. We have to learn to be better listeners to one another. Our world is polarized because we have become tribal, and we join our tribe and we defend our tribe. But we've got to figure out how we live in this world with our differences. And so I'm going to be a Christian who says, I'm not just going to step in and defend my tribe, I'm actually going to try and figure out and ask this question, how can we do a better job living together given our differences, and how can we do a better job of understanding the nature of our differences? And to do that, I've got to be a better listener. And if we are a better listener, we may hear things actually that we need to hear in the midst of that conversation that may draw us towards one another and move us towards one another, because the polarity that we're in right now has us so absolutely divided that I don't have the time or the attention or the inclination to listen to you, and that will never get us anywhere. That will keep us in the cul de sac of polarization that we're in

Libin Abraham 44:02

that's good in the Hebrew, the words justice and righteousness have the same root word, and I think sometimes in our society, some camps have picked one over the other. And yet, God's idea of biblical justice is justice paired with righteousness that you can't have justice and action without a right relationship with Him and seeing him as righteous. And

you can't have righteousness without commitment to his view of justice. And so I want to just encourage you, if you've kind of leaned towards the belief side, the righteousness side of you lean towards the ethics and the justice side. It was always meant to be

Speaker 1 44:36

together, and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

Libin Abraham 44:40

Amen. That's good. Hey, today, would you thank Dr Darrell Bock, real quick. Amen. Thank you, Darrell. At the heart of justice is a heart of service. It is caring about people, and we didn't necessarily on our leadership team planned this Sunday to be our annual care Sunday, but it is, and it's the way that. We celebrate how we care for people in our body, and we invite people who need care and who have the ability to care. So you'll see all kinds of stuff in the lobby. But before we talk about care, would you listen to the story of Pastor Carol Mead, who leads our care ministry, and how she was compelled into the area of caring for one another.