**Week 6 (Monday November 9) Economic Justice: A God Who Identifies with the Poor – Dr. Timothy Keller**

Economic Justice is described by two Hebrew words in the Bible \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Mishpat\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_Tzadeqah\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ which are both translated \_\_\_\_\_\_righteousness or Justice\_\_\_\_\_ These words are difficult to translate but if you look for all the places where the words Tzadequah and Mishpat show up it is near \_\_\_\_money\_\_\_\_\_ and near the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_poor\_\_\_\_\_\_.

What is economic justice? I will give you three things that the Bible says about this. First \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Equal Treatment of everyone\_\_\_\_\_\_, Secondly \_\_\_\_\_Special concern and respect and aid for those without economic power and thirdly \_\_\_Radical generosity with your own money and possessions. Unless your life reflects those three things you are actually not doing economic justice.

A. Equal treatment means having the same law for the \_\_\_”Immigrant, and Foreigner as for the native born.” Lev 24:22, Lev 19:15 “Do not show partiality to the rich or poor in the lawsuit but judge fairly. Race and class is not privilege. Acts 10 Peter says, “Now I see that God does not play favorites.”

The Bible teaches that it is unjust to treat people differently on the basis of how much money they have. First unfair wages and prices, Proverbs 11:26 describes hoarding grain at the time of a poor harvest to drive up prices. Jeremiah 22:13, Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:14, 15, you are to pay just wages that meant timely wages.

Secondly, unfair legal practices Deut. 24:17 says, “Don’t deprive a foreigner or the fatherless of justice.” The foreigner is of a different race, but the fatherless was of your race. Somebody with less money or lower economic class than you, was not to be treated differently in court and you must not treat them differently in government.

Bribery is condemned. Isaiah 1:3 says, “Your leaders are always accepting bribes and they never defend orphans in court or listen when widows present their cases. What’s wrong with bribery? Poor people can’t bribe. When your outcome and your treatment are affected to a great degree by how much money you have that’s a stench in God’s nostrils.

The system of bail, political contributions, legal system, that is weighted in favor of people with more money is unequal treatment, unfair legal practice and a third unequal treatment is unfair business practices with unjust scales.

B. Economic justice is not just treating everybody equally, but it means special concern, respect and aid for people without economic power. Unless you take into consideration the lack of economic power that poor people have, you are not treating them fairly. Proverbs 31:8&9 “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Speak up for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly. Defend the rights of the poor and the needy.”

Psalms 41:1 “Blessed is the one who considers the weak, poor.” The word considers is a strong word. It means think meditate strategize. Look at the poor in your community and think, “How do I lift them up?” there’s a sense in which you feel treat everyone equally, there’s another sense in which you better not treat everybody equally because it’s not fair.

The Bible says there are three things we should be doing, Relief, development and reform.

Relief is what people traditionally think of as helping the poor as in the Good Samaritan as in financial subsidy, clothing, soup kitchen. But that is not the goal. The goal is to lift people up to be self sufficient not keep them in a state of dependency.

Deuteronomy 15 describes slavery as a bankruptcy law. In those days when you declared bankruptcy you worked exclusively for that creditor until the debt was gone. The mercy of the Mosaic covenant was that you could only stay as a slave for 6 years. Deut. 15 also says you must send them out with what it would take for them to establish themselves as economically self-sufficient. That’s the idea of relief development.

Job 29: 17 doesn’t say he clothed the naked and shared his food with the hungry. He says, “He broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.” He saw people oppressing the poor and he went after them and stopped them. That is social reform. If that good Samaritan went month after month to Jericho and every single month he met 2 or 3 more people beaten because of robbers he might say, instead of me just picking people up maybe we need to increase police protection on the road, maybe we need to check the road conditions that are producing the beating up of people That is working on social structure.

Without special concern, respect and aid for the poor you are not actually treating them fairly, you are actually engaging in economic injustice.

C. Radical Generosity. This is where a lot of Americans go nuts. If I want to help that’s fine but that’s up to me, it’s voluntary, it’s charity. Job 31 describes if I have, but do not share it’s sin. Psalms 11:29 says giving to the poor is named acts of righteousness. Matthew 6:1 Jesus talks about alms giving as acts of righteousness directly tied to the idea that when you give to the poor it’s not called in Hebrew charity it was called justice.

Think about this for a second. My children grew up in New York City. I knew that my children had 3 or 400 times better chance of having a successful economic life than the kids who were growing up in some very poor parts of the city. Why? Well the Democrats would say it was an unjust social system. And the Republicans would say bad families, family breakdown. Biblically they are both true. I want to point out it’s not the kids fault where they were born. Therefore there is an inequitable distribution of economic power. People are just born into it. Deuteronomy 24 says when you’re harvesting in your field, …. Beating the olives from the trees…… grapes on the vines don’t go back, the rest belongs to the immigrant, fatherless and widow. The point is it’s not just for you to maximize our profits. Not all of your money is yours.

There are six background biblical beliefs. First, what the Bible says about your attitude toward your own wealth, none of your wealth is yours, it’s God’s. Chronicles 29:12 2. Second, Poverty may be caused by oppression. Calamity, famine, war. Third, we are the image of God. Fourth, love your neighbor as Christ defines in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Fifth, one of the reasons people in America push back on talk about justice is because they’re gullible to the American idea that there is no corporate responsibility. Daniel confesses the sins of his people. Akin stole from the battle of Jericho…. affecting whole families to death. Ezek.18 says God punishes people for their own sin not the sin of their fathers. Individual responsibility is dominant in the Bible you do have to take responsibility for yourself. You do have to make your own choices and yet the idea of corporate responsibility is there.

God identifies with the poor. Proverbs 14:31 says if you insult the poor you insult the Lord. Proverbs 19:17 says if you give to the poor you give to the Lord. When God introduces himself he says I’m a father to the fatherless a defender of widows.