

Dear fellow pilgrims,

Last week we had the privilege of discussing Lewis's provocative chapter on Social Morality, in which Lewis continues his discourse on Christian Behavior with this chapter's focus on justice and society. His reflections and conclusions are fascinating and relevant: "...*The real snag in all this drawing up of blueprints for a Christian society [is that] most of us are not really approaching the subject in order to find out what Christianity says: we are approaching it in the hope of finding support from Christianity for the views of our own party. We are looking for an ally where we are offered either a Master or—a Judge.*"

Here is an outline of some of the key points we covered last week:

Book 3, Chapter 3. Social Morality

--**The first thing** to get clear about Christian morality between man and man is that in this department Christ did not come to preach any brand new morality.

--**The second thing** to get clear is that Christianity has not, and does not profess to have, a detailed political programme for applying "Do as you would be done by" to a particular society at a particular moment. People say, "The Church ought to give us a lead." By the Church they ought to mean the whole body of practising Christians...should be directed to putting "Do as you would be done by" into action. If that happened, and if we others were really ready to take it, then we should find the Christian solution for our own social problems pretty quickly.

--**Clergy** By a "lead from the Church," most people mean they want the clergy to put out a political program. That is silly. The clergy are those particular people within the whole Church who have been specially trained and set aside to look after what concerns us as creatures who are going to live for ever: and we are asking them to do a quite different job for which they have not been trained. The job is really on us, on the laymen.

--**A Fully Christian Society?** All the same, the New Testament, without going into details, gives us a pretty clear hint of what a fully Christian society would be like. Each of us would like some bits of it, but I am afraid very few of us would like the whole thing. That is just what one would expect if Christianity is the total plan for the human machine. You will find this again and again about anything that is really Christian: everyone is attracted by bits of it and wants to pick out those bits and leave the rest.

--**Interest** Now another point. There is one bit of advice given to us by the ancient heathen Greeks, and by the Jews in the Old Testament, and by the great Christian teachers of the Middle Ages, which the modern economic system has completely disobeyed. All these people told us not to lend money at interest.

--**Work and Giving** In the passage where the New Testament says that every one must work, it gives as a reason "in order that he may have something to give to those in need." Charity—giving to the poor—is an essential part of Christian morality. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare.

--**Fear** For many of us the great obstacle to charity lies not in our luxurious living or desire for more money, but in our fear—fear of insecurity. This must often be recognised as a temptation. Sometimes our pride also hinders our charity; we are tempted to spend more than we ought on the showy forms of generosity (tipping, hospitality) and less than we ought on those who really need our help. And now, before I end, I am going to venture on a guess as to how this section has affected any who

have read it My guess is that there are some Leftist people among them who are very angry that it has not gone further in that direction, and some people of an opposite sort who are angry because they think it has gone much too far. If so, that brings us right up against the real snag in all this drawing up of blueprints for a Christian society. Most of us are not really approaching the subject in order to find out what Christianity says: we are approaching it in the hope of finding support from Christianity for the views of our own party. We are looking for an ally where we are offered either a Master or—a Judge. I am just the same. There are bits in this section that I wanted to leave out. And that is why nothing whatever is going to come of such talks unless we go a much longer way round.

--Conclusion –THE most important part of this entire chapter!

--A Christian society is not going to arrive until most of us really want it: and we are not going to want it until we become fully Christian. I may repeat "Do as you would be done by" till I am black in the face, but I cannot really carry it out till I love my neighbour as myself: and

--I cannot learn to love my neighbour as myself till I learn to love God: and I cannot learn to love God except by learning to obey Him. And so, as I warned you, we are driven on to something more inward —driven on from social matters to religious matters. For the longest way round is the shortest way home.

Here is the link for class tomorrow, Wednesday, March 17, at 7:15 p.m. EDT--please feel free to share the link with any friends who may be interested:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99307536525>

I look forward to "seeing" you tomorrow in class on Zoom!

Further up and further in,
Brian+

Music link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uW93ZVQAZis>

Video link to last week's class:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mVMnuVnrfY>

Podcast link:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/mere-christianity-episode-17-book-3-chapter-3-social/id1537579476?i=1000512490201>

Audio on church website link:

<https://www.stphilipschurchsc.org/mere-christianity-/episode/2021-03-10/mere-christianity-episode-17-book-3-chapter-3-social-morality>