

REBUILDING
~Justice for All~
First Christian Church—November 22, 2020
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ME (slide) The Reason for Rebuilding... (fence project)

(slide) Doing the good work of rebuilding requires setting wrongs right.

Sometimes those wrongs are difficult problems to solve. They take time. They take a lot of hard work and serious thinking and dialogue with others. Doing the right thing means undoing the wrong things which are in the way and which prevent what's right from happening.

This is an issue in our country right now. But we need to be careful when we think about Social Justice, that we first, understand what Justice really is, and secondly, that we don't inadvertently create more injustice by believing and carrying out a false idea about what Justice actually is.

WE can't do the good work God asks US to do if WE aren't doing what's right!

Nehemiah believed that rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem was a holy endeavor. Once he learned about the injustice happening in Judea among his own people, all of whom were supposed to be participating in this good work, he could not continue until this wrong was set right. What was it?...

(message slide) GOD'S Story—Justice for All, Nehemiah 5

(slide-ref only) Injustice in Judea, Nehemiah 5:1-8

- The landless starving
- Landowners mortgaging their property to buy food
- Farmers borrowing money from fellow Jews to pay Babylon's tax on their fields
- Children used as collateral for loans becoming slaves to their own countrymen
- Jews sold to Gentiles as slaves had to be purchased back

(slide-ref only) The Verdict, Nehemiah 5:9a "What you are doing is not right."

- "And we can't continue doing this good work of rebuilding until we get this very wrong situation put right!" We have the audacity to say we're working for heaven when we're living like hell! **It's critical that we examine ourselves...**
- Lit., "What you are doing is not *good*." Hebrew—*Tob*, same word in **(slide) Micah 6:8**
- What does it mean to "act justly" or to "do justice?" Well, let's see...

(slide-ref only) Justice Restored, Nehemiah 5:9b-13

- So, what is Justice? Hebrew—*Tsedek*, Living in right relationship to God, to your fellow man, and to creation. Following the rule of moral law, being impartial, paying what you owe, not stealing, cheating, accepting bribes, or taking advantage of the weak.
- Notice, Nehemiah did not say, "Redistribute the wealth! It's wrong for you to be rich and others poor." NO! He said, "Stop oppressing and exploiting the poor and the weak!"
- Justice does not mean "everyone gets a trophy." In a Just Society people are recognized and valued for their God-given uniqueness and rewarded for competence, ability, effort, ingenuity, and talent.

You don't chop off Husain Bolt's legs to make the race fair for everyone else!

(slide) Justice is impartially giving all people what is due them as God's creatures. And not withholding what is due them just because they may be weak or different.

- Equality insures we ALL receive Justice—what is rightly due us, whether reward or punishment. It doesn't mean we are all the same or even should be.

(slide-ref only) A Just Leader, Nehemiah 5:14-19

He gave up his governor's salary for the good of the people around him who were struggling. *Nehemiah gave up what was due him so that others could have what was due them.* Hmmm...

We are rebuilding at FCC. My challenge is this: Give your time and talent to the rebuilding of this church, as Nehemiah and his people gave theirs to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall.

(Volunteer Video) See back of bulletin.

Rebuilding at FCC Commitment Card...

Big Idea: (slide) Rebuilding what is good requires doing what is right.

Right On!

(OT Scripture Readings: Psalm 45:6-7; Micah 6:8)