

INTRODUCTION:

- Welcome to visitors...
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As we begin this morning's lesson I wanted to share with you a few details from a Morkassel car ride home from church a few years ago.

We were driving home from church and, I don't know what started the conversation, but we were talking about how quick some people are to take up legal actions against another.

- Traci and I were telling the girls that if someone jumped our fence and broke their ankle in a hole in our back yard that they could sue us and possibly make us pay for their injuries even though they were trespassing on our property.
- We told the girls about the McDonalds Hot Coffee lawsuit and how McDonalds had to pay out a large sum of money because someone spilled hot coffee on themselves.
- These things really upset Katie and Kelsey and as we gave scenario after scenario of how unjust this world is the girls got more and more upset.
- They kept saying, "**That is so unfair!!**" Katie said, "**Even I know that coffee is hot enough to burn you!**"
- We told them that their grandpa knows someone whose daughter was in a public shower at college and she was attacked by a man who was trying to molest her. Apparently she fought back and beat him up pretty good and then subdued him until help could arrive. Katie and Kelsey really got upset when Traci told them that that man tried suing her for injuries he sustained in the incident.
- My point of all of this is... We live in a very unfair world. There are a lot of things that happens to us that just are not right. We live in an unjust world!

A few years ago, I was asked to do a deposition for an accident on the slippery sidewalk in front of a place that I used to work.

- I didn't see the man fall on the ice patch, however I distinctly remember the man being assisted into the office and our manager running around trying to offer the gentleman comfort and (I am sure) hoping that our company wouldn't get sued.
- If that lawsuit would have gone to court, the facts would be presented, the evidence would be produced, eye witness accounts would be spoken, and perhaps even expert opinions would be given.
- Once the jury or the judge processed all of the information, an opinion would be made and these final conclusions would be presented for all to hear.
- This is what we call today...the Justice System.

In a slightly similar way, Jesus' disciples and other early Christians had a lot of pieces of information that they were gathering and they were all forming their opinions and drawing conclusions regarding the authenticity of Jesus' claims based on the evidence.

- When the NT was written by Jesus' disciples and other God-inspired writers, it was written in a way that showed why they believed in Jesus as the Messiah and demonstrates the evidence that allowed them to be so convicted in their beliefs.
- In order for someone to make a determination of truth, they need to look at all the facts and piece them together.

How unfortunate it is that people have ignored and have taken lightly the evidence that the Bible contains.

- When they ignore the truth, they are only doing to themselves a great injustice.
- This morning, I would like us to take a look at a passage of scripture where Matthew observed that a prophesy was fulfilled right before his very eyes.

- This was just one of the many pieces of evidence that convinced him that Jesus really was the Messiah that He had been claiming to be.
- Please turn with me to **Matthew 12**.

As we take a look at this passage, we can see Matthew's faith in Jesus, we can get a glimpse of what God says about justice, and we can learn something about the nature of God.

- We will also be able to consider the importance of seeking all the facts before making a judgment.
- The Pharisees had made a judgment about Jesus without even considering any of the evidence.

Let's begin by reading **Matthew 12:14-17...**

14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

15 But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all,

16 and warned them not to tell who He was.

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

So...Here what we are seeing is that Matthew was an eyewitness who saw Jesus and how the Pharisees were upset with Him because He was bringing a new teaching.

- The Pharisees did not have an open mind toward the truth.
- Their hearts were hardened and they did not make an effort to consider the evidence that Jesus was producing. (The evidence that was confirmed by the prophecies of the Old Testament.)
- Not only were they not open to the truth, but they held such hatred in their hearts that they plotted against Him. Jesus knew that they planned to kill Him, so he left there and continued healing people in secret.
- Matthew observed this secretiveness and said in **verse 17**, "***This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet.***"

Let us continue on and read the prophecy that Matthew was referring to...These are the words of God, written by Isaiah... Let's continue reading **Matthew 12** and look at **verses 18-21**:

18 "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.

19 "HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.

20 "A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.

21 "AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE."

As we focus our attention on this prophesy this morning, we can learn a number of things about the nature of God.

- The first thing that we can observe about God's nature, is that...

I. Our God is a god of Justice.

In the second half of **verse 18** God speaks of Jesus and says, "***I will put my spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.***"

- Usually when we think of Jesus' purpose in being sent to this world, we automatically think of salvation and absolutely, salvation is the most important reason that Jesus came down and died on a cross.
- However, there are countless other side benefits to His coming.
- In this case, God is telling us that a part of the reason that He sent Jesus was to bring justice to the world.

We live in a world where tiny babies are not even given the option to live, simply because they are not convenient for self-centered parents.

- A hundred years ago, Americans would have been appalled at the idea of abortion being legalized.
- They would not believe that it is accepted as normal in society. We've grown so accustomed to abortions that we sometimes even vote for leaders who support these acts...sad...

- It is not fair that innocent people are often punished and those who are obviously guilty, are able to get a good enough lawyer to get away with murder because of today's judicial system. (Improper handling of evidence for example...)
- It's not fair that bad things happen to good people!
- It's not fair that good things happen for bad people.

Something happened in Louisiana a little while back that I thought was an extremely poor exhibit of justice.

- The Louisiana citizens were basically told that their votes on issues in their state don't really mean much.
- The people of Louisiana voted overwhelmingly for a ban on gay marriages and yet a single liberal judge was able to "over rule" the democratic process and has allowed these ceremonies to be sanctioned by their state government.
- This is not a just world! Injustices are being done to all kinds of good people today.
- We live in a world that is full of faults, full of troubles, full of strife, and full of sinful people!

Guess what?... These injustices are not a new thing!!

- If we go back to the first 5 books of the Bible we can find that people treated each other unjustly then too.
- We find in the second book of the Bible, in **Exodus 23** that some would mess up the justice system by twisting the truth and they were holding partiality toward those who were poor and those they did not like.
- **Exodus 23:2-6** says, *"You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute. "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him. "You shall not pervert the justice due to your needy brother in his dispute."*

We also find another interesting passage in the fifth book of the Bible, in **Deuteronomy 16:19-20**...

- It says, *"You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you."*

Although we live in an unjust world, we do have the reassurance that there is one judge who will make sure that justice is done in the end!

- This judge knows all the facts and has seen all of the evidence and will make a ruling that gives the accused the punishment that they deserve.
- This judge sent his only son into the world in order to proclaim justice! Our God is a just god!

I don't mean to be overly negative this morning, I hope you will bear with me...

- I wouldn't be doing you any favors if I avoided the fact that God says that those who do bad things are to be punished for their actions...
- There are countless passages in God's word that make it perfectly clear that those who do evil will have to pay the consequences!

For example, **Psalms 34:21** says, *"Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned."*

- **Psalms 94:23** says, *"He has brought back their wickedness upon them and will destroy them in their evil; The LORD our God will destroy them."*
- And **Proverbs 11:19-21** compares the judgment of a righteous person with that of an evil person. It says, *"He who is steadfast in righteousness will attain to life, and he who pursues evil will bring about his own death. The perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless in their walk are His delight. Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished, But the descendants of the righteous will be delivered."*

Based on what we just read, we can take courage in knowing that our God is a just god.

- Please turn with me to a passage in **Psalm 7**...
- This beautiful passage shows us that God knows our hearts and our minds and therefore judges us fairly.
- It reassures us that He takes care of those who have tender hearts.
- Read with me... **Psalm 7:9-13**... *“O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds. My shield is with God, Who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts.”*

First of all then, we have learned this morning, that our God is a god of justice. There is a second thing that we can learn about the nature of God and that is that...

II. Our God is gentle and loving.

Although God is harsh in dealing with disobedience, like a good parent, He threatens punishment because of His love and compassion for us.

- **Psalm 33:5** for example shows this balance. *“He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.”*
- **Psalm 89:14** also shows how justice and love are part of God’s nature. *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.”*
- We can see from both of these passages that God’s nature includes an amount of love and kindness that is unsurpassing.

When we come back to our text in **Matthew 12**, we see that in **verse 19** God speaks of Jesus and says that, *“He will not quarrel, nor cry out.”*

- Our Lord’s teachings were not brash and obnoxious and He never approached others in an argumentative way! His messages were always very thought provoking and reasonable.
- Have you ever heard about the street corner evangelist who is always yelling at pedestrians to repent or go to hell? Jesus did not approach others this way.
- He did not quarrel nor cry out. His message was peaceful and sincere.
- One commentary that I read, said that Jesus was not seeking publicity or popularity.
- He gently and lovingly presented the truth in a way that was easy to understand.

We can especially see God’s gentleness and love in **verse 20**. It says, *“A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT...”*

- The “*battered*” or “*bruised reed*” refers to a person’s broken soul from the winds of sin.
- It is referring to someone with a broken spirit, who is feeling discouraged and down because the weight of sin has become a burden to them.
- But God is saying that He will not “*break off*” the “*bruised reed*.” He will not be severe, cruel, and unforgiving. And if possible, He will heal it, pardon it, and give it strength.

The “*smoldering wick*” or “*smoking flax*” refers to a person whose fire is just barely burning.

- Some commentaries say that this is referring to a Christian in a weakened state.
- One whose fire has almost gone out and they are struggling to hold on to their faith.
- God told Isaiah that He would not snuff out or “*quench*” the “*smoldering wick*.”
- He would not oppress those of little strength and He would not put out the hope that is keeping them going.
- It doesn’t take much to put out a low burning wick. An abrupt wind can easily put it out.
- Yet a slight breeze is also capable of brightening the flame too!
- I can picture God gently blowing on a smoldering wick to give it a brighter and stronger flame.

In an attempt to summarize this quote from Isaiah, I put together my own loose translation of this paragraph. This is the New Revised Morkassel Translation:

- Christ was sent by God as a servant to bring justice to all mankind...He will not fight & quarrel, but He will come peacefully. He will not cry out in the streets for the sake of publicity or for gaining popularity,

but he will meekly deliver a message that God will not “break” the sinner or the down trodden. He will not crush the hopes of those who have been caught in a life of sin and He will not extinguish the low burn of the feeble, struggling, and fainting Christian.

We have seen therefore that God is a god of justice and that He is loving and gentle. Another thing that we can learn about the nature of God from **Matthew 12** comes from the end of **verse 20** and in **verse 21**.

III. Our God is trustworthy.

He will “*lead justice to victory*” and will offer hope to the world.

- This morning, we have talked a lot about how unjust and unfair this world really is.
- We are surrounded by tragedies and mishaps; and we are surrounded by people who wouldn’t mind getting the best of us if they believe they can get away with it.
- However, what they don’t realize is that they **can’t** get away with it!
- Their injustices will catch up to them when they are standing before the Lord in judgment.
- He sees all and knows all and we are told that God will lead justice to victory!
- What this means, is that God has said that He will be victorious over the injustices of this world.
- When God says He’ll do something, we know that He is trustworthy and will follow through with his promise.
- In the end, justice will be done and all who trust in Him will be given hope.
- As **Proverbs 21:15** says, “*The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous, But is terror to the workers of iniquity.*”

Isaiah spoke the words of the Lord as quoted in **verse 21** and He said, “*In His name the Gentiles will hope.*”

- The NIV says “*In His name the nations will put their hope.*”
- This phrase applies to us today! We trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise and the injustices of this world will be left behind. This gives us hope.
- We put our trust in His name because as **Psalms 37:28-30** says, “*For the LORD loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off. The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, And his tongue speaks justice.*”

SUMMARY:

This morning, we have learned a number of things about the nature of God from a fulfilled prophesy observed by the inspired writer Matthew.

1. Our Lord is just.
2. He is gentle and loving
3. And He is trustworthy.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

There is another part of God’s nature that we have not discussed in detail.

- Our God of justice is also a god of mercy.
- The thing is... we deserve justice! We all sin and are guilty of impurities. We don’t deserve to be rewarded. We so readily fall short of God’s high expectations for us!
- In reality, we don’t deserve to go to heaven.
- When we stand before the heavenly court and God reviews the evidence of sin in our lives, God will have no choice but to announce the verdict. **GUILTY AS CHARGED!**
- The good news is... When we put on Christ in baptism, the sin in our lives are removed from the evidence room and they are destroyed. They no longer exist.
- After baptism, when Christ is our lawyer, we can stand before God and He will not remember the past offenses.

- As **Isaiah** says in **chapter 40:27**, “*My way is hidden from the Lord, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God.*”
- He will overlook every lie, lust, and gossip. He will not see your deceit, anger, and slander.
- When you go to the heavenly court with Christ at your side, the God of justice will look on you with mercy and He will say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant!*”
- What a glorious moment that will be!

In the Bible all kinds of facts regarding the nature of God are presented, countless eyewitness accounts are written, the Bible is full of evidence, and expert opinions are given.

- Now it is your time for deliberation. Now is the time that you need to decide your own verdict.
- Are you going to be a victim of God’s justice system? Or are you going to be a participant in His mercy?

If you have never been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, what are you waiting for? The Judgment Day?

- It will be too late...If this morning’s lesson has touched your heart and you would like to study baptism in more detail or if you would like the prayers of the church...the invitation is now.
- Or if you would like to bury your sins in the water of baptism and be raised up to newness of life, please come forward as we stand and sing the invitation song...