

19 October, 2025

19th Sunday after Pentecost

True compassion is based on Justice

Amos 8:4-10, Psalm 82, 1 John 3:14-18, Luke 16:19-31

Key Verse: *“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.’”* Luke 16:25

Compassion is one of the defining characteristics of God, as we see repeatedly in the Bible. However, true compassion must be grounded in justice. Without justice, compassion is incomplete. The Scriptures make it clear that God’s compassion always operates within the framework of justice, for He is both loving and just. In the world we live in, it is easy to offer acts of compassion without addressing the deeper issues of injustice, but God calls us to reflect His nature by showing compassion that upholds justice. Today, as we explore Amos 8:4-10, Psalm 82, 1 John 3:14-18, and Luke 16:19-31, we will reflect on how God’s Word teaches us that true compassion is inseparable from justice. We are called not only to care for others in their suffering but also to seek justice that transforms systems of inequality and oppression.

1. The Cry of the Oppressed and the Call for Justice (Amos 8:4-10)

In the book of Amos, we hear the prophetic voice crying out against the injustices of the wealthy who exploit the poor. Amos 8:4-10 warns against the corruption and greed of those who “trample the needy” and “bring ruin to the poor of the land” (v.4). The people Amos addresses were manipulating the markets and cheating in their trade practices, all while ignoring the suffering of the vulnerable. This passage reminds us that true compassion requires

us to address the systemic injustices that cause suffering in the first place. Compassion is not merely about giving charity; it is about seeking fairness and equity in society. God's heart is moved by the cries of the oppressed, and He calls His people to be agents of justice. Just as Amos condemned the unethical practices of his day, we too must speak out against the exploitation of the weak and vulnerable in our society today. As we reflect on this passage, we are challenged to consider whether our compassion goes beyond individual acts of kindness and extends to advocating for justice in the systems and structures that perpetuate inequality. God's judgment, as seen in Amos, is directed not just at personal immorality but at collective injustice.

2. Defending the Weak and Upholding Justice (Psalm 82)

Psalm 82 gives us a glimpse into God's heart for justice. It is a psalm that portrays God standing in judgment over the "gods" or rulers of the earth, demanding that they "defend the weak and the fatherless," "uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed," and "rescue the weak and the needy" (v. 3-4). This psalm reflects God's desire for justice to be the foundation of human leadership and society. True compassion, according to Psalm 82, is active. It does not remain silent in the face of injustice, but instead seeks to protect and uplift those who are marginalized. God calls His people to be His hands and feet in the world, defending the weak and ensuring that justice is served. One of the most compelling aspects of this psalm is the reminder that those who fail to act justly will ultimately be held accountable by God. In our own lives, we must examine whether we are standing with the oppressed and working for justice, or whether we are complicit in the injustices around us. As people of faith, we are called to defend those who cannot defend themselves, and this is an essential aspect of true compassion.

3. Compassion in Action: Love Through Deeds, Not Just Words (1 John 3:14-18)

The epistle reading from 1 John 3:14-18 brings us to the heart of Christian compassion: love in action. John emphasizes that love is more than just a feeling or a spoken word; it must be demonstrated through tangible acts of care and generosity. "Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (v. 18). True compassion requires us to act on behalf of others, especially those in need. John makes a powerful point: if we have material possessions and see a brother or sister in need but do nothing to help them, how can the love of God be in us? (v. 17). Compassion that does not translate into action is empty and superficial. Here, John reinforces the idea that true

compassion is based on justice. If we truly love our neighbour, we will not only meet their immediate needs but will also work to eliminate the injustices that keep them in poverty or oppression. John's exhortation is clear: our faith and love must be lived out through practical, everyday actions that bring relief to those who are suffering.

4. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus: The Consequences of Ignoring Injustice (Luke 16:19-31)

In the Gospel passage, Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, a powerful story about the consequences of ignoring injustice. The rich man lived in luxury while Lazarus, a poor man, lay at his gate, covered in sores and longing for the scraps from the rich man's table. The rich man had the means to help Lazarus, but he chose to ignore him. After both men die, the roles are reversed: Lazarus is comforted in heaven, while the rich man is tormented in hell. When the rich man begs for relief, Abraham reminds him that he had received good things in his lifetime, while Lazarus suffered. Now, justice is served as Lazarus is comforted, and the rich man is in agony. This parable highlights the eternal consequences of failing to show compassion and justice in this life. The rich man's sin was not simply that he was wealthy; it was that he ignored the suffering of someone in need right outside his door. True compassion, as Jesus teaches here, involves seeing the needs of others and responding with justice. It is not enough to feel pity for the suffering; we must act to relieve their suffering and work toward a more just world. The story of the rich man and Lazarus challenges us to examine our own lives: Are we like the rich man, ignoring the needs of those around us? Or are we living out the kind of compassion that seeks justice for the oppressed and the poor?

Conclusion

True compassion is not just about feeling sympathy for others; it is about taking action to correct injustices and alleviate suffering. As we have seen in Amos, Psalm 82, 1 John, and Luke, compassion and justice are inseparable in the eyes of God. We are called to live out our faith through acts of love, kindness, and justice, standing up for the oppressed and working toward a fairer and more equitable world. In a world filled with inequality and injustice, may we be known as people who reflect God's heart of compassion and justice. May we not be like the rich man who ignored Lazarus, but rather like those who defend the weak, care for the needy, and advocate for justice in all we do.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word, which challenges us to live lives of true compassion and justice. Help us to see the needs of those around us and give us the courage to act with love and fairness. Strengthen us to be advocates for the oppressed and the marginalized, and guide us to work for justice in our communities. Lord, we ask for Your forgiveness for the times we have ignored the suffering of others. Fill us with Your Spirit, that we may love not only with words but with deeds and in truth. May our lives reflect Your heart of compassion and justice. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.