



The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost's sermon notes
of his message, preached September 30th, 2018

© 2018 Smythe Street Cathedral - Do Not Copy Without Permission

✚ Last week Pastor Wayne talked about being a Defender of the Weak... a couple of verses that he started with...

Learn to do good; Seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. Isaiah 1:17 (NKJV). Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. Proverbs 31:8,9 (NIV)

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves ...

✚ Most of all of us in the room have been born on the upper side of justice, power, human rights and privileges that many people in the world do not have. We, as Canadians, take for granted the rights and freedoms of all Canadians, the right to health, to clean water, the right to an education, the right to choose who we want to vote for, the right to speech, who we want to marry, the right to work and make money, the right to get a drivers licence...

✚ **Our nation is a nation of conquerors.** We came, we fought, we won, we took, we settled, and we set our laws in place to defend our rights... we conquerors wrote our own Laws!

So, as a son, just by the fact that I was born to Canadians, I was born an automatic conqueror with rights I never fought for or earned.

✚ The Bible, was written from the perspective of a very different reality. The Bible was written from the perspective of **the underside of power.** The Old Testament story started to be written at a time when a people had been slaves for 400 years. With no rights, no minimum wages, no freedoms, no right to vote, oppressed!

“They were a people who knew the bitter taste of poverty and the oppressive nature of the powerful who held them in their grip”.

They tell their story with the full awareness that they had known abuse, they had known the feeling of a heel applied to the neck with the sense of feeling powerless to do anything about it.

✚ The New Testament was also written at a time when the tyranny of the Romans ruled and bullied the nation of Israel. Low wages, abusive taxes, no rights, no freedom of speech were the framework of the words of Jesus when he said,

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”
Matthew 25:34-36

It is in the face of being surrounded by abuse and injustice that the Psalmist prophesies the hope in a coming Messiah saying...

“He (Jesus) will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.” Psalm 72:4

✚ **In the Bible context, what does it mean to be poor?**

In our context, in our **money driven world**, in our culture controlled by **Mammon**, we see someone “poor” as someone who has no money.

Because most of us have experienced privilege and opportunity, having been raised in the homes on the upper side of capitalism and prosperity, descendants of the conquerors, the Romans and Egyptians of the modern-day era, we tend to view poor as lazy, as “bums”, someone that’s taking advantage of the system!

So we read into the scriptures our understanding of “poor” and we relate it to lack of money, often because of laziness or poor judgement! At best, we pity them and toss them a favour or a Tooney. We collect money at Christmas and buy them Turkeys.

So we have a difficult time connecting the word “justice” and “poor”.

“He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.” Psalm 72:4 (NKJV)

In the Bible, the word **poor** is more related to the idea of oppression, disadvantaged, weak, stripped of opportunity, underprivileged.

It is being a **victim** of unjust laws and unfair opportunities. It is not having the power to take charge of your circumstances. It is oppression, isolation and injustice. **It is more about the cause than the effect!**

“He (Jesus) will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.” Psalm 72:4

He is the DEFENDER of the WEAK!

He seeks justice for those affected by oppression and abuse. The disadvantaged, underprivileged. Those who find themselves stripped of fair opportunities. Those that don’t have the power to take charge of their circumstances.

He sees the CAUSE and sees it as injustice! He sees life from the bottom up versus the top down.

It’s difficult for many of us to understand the **CAUSE** of the poor and misfortunate when all we have ever known is privilege, wealth, and opportunity.

It difficult to see the world from the bottom up versus the top down from our modern day Egypt Roman capitalist advantage

Example: In NB the minimum wage is \$11.25. So, a full-time person making minimum wage can make \$23,000 a year.

Most of us working full time jobs in this room make over double that. But let’s work with someone working minimum wage = \$23,000 a year

By the way, in Haiti the minimum wage is about 50 cents and hour

There is a web site called *globalrichlist.com*. There you put in your currency and annual amount. So we put \$23,000 and select “Show my results” = You are in the top 5% richest people in the world.

If you make \$50,000 a year you are in the top 1% richest people

That gives you and your kids a huge advantage in the world!

Did you know that in New Brunswick, a single person receives \$537 a month on social assistance.

This totals only \$7,028 a year. This hasn’t changed since 2010.

A bare bones rooming house in Fredericton costs between **\$350 to \$400 per month**, and a bus pass to get around costs **\$80 a month**.

This would leave someone who is living in a rooming house and needs a form of transportation with about **\$60 a month for food, cloths, toiletries, meds, a form of communication (phone) a month.**

This does not account for any emergency expenses (Bad tooth).

Why should I care? BECAUSE IT IS AN INJUSTICE! And our God is a God of justice!

Many of the people on social assistance struggle with mental illness, broken family backgrounds, addiction issues, **they have spiraled down into a social dark hole of hopelessness and desperation**, feeling like their only alternative is shop-lifting, panhandling, prostitution or drug dealing... just to **survive!**

What does God say to us...

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy”. Proverbs 31:8,9 (NIV)

Why? Because our God is a defender of the widow, the fatherless, the foreigner, the poor, the weak... and He calls us to do so as well!

Speak up! Defend! Don't just pity them and toss them some change on the way by, we are called to action... speak up! Defend! Do something about it!

“Those who shut their ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in their own time of need.” Proverbs 21:13

“The godly care about the rights of the poor; the wicked don't care at all.” Proverbs 29:7 (NLT)

God's heart for the poor, the needy, the weak, is mentioned in over 2,000 verses of the Bible. The Bible has more to say about poverty than it has to say about heaven or hell! **To miss this point is to totally miss a pivotal truth in God's Word!**

I said last week that...

“A church's greatness is measured by how it treats the weakest members of its neighbourhood”

How it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children!

“Whoever receives a little child in My name receives Me.” Matthew 18:5

WHY? He is the DEFENDER of the WEAK!

“A church's greatness is measured by how it treats the weakest members of its neighbourhood”

How it treats those who are in the twilight of life, the aged!

WHY? He is the DEFENDER of the WEAK!

“A church's greatness is measured by how it treats the weakest members of its neighbourhood”

How it treats those in the shadows of life, the sick!

How it treats those in the gutters of life, the poor, the marginalised, the forgotten, the weak!

WHY? He is the DEFENDER of the WEAK!

The Bible often mentions different types of poverty related to misfortunes:

- Those who fall into misfortunes because of sickness or other life calamities leaving them **poor**.
- Those who fall into misfortune because they are **orphans** (Children of single parents)
- The **widow**, who falls in misfortune because she loses her husband.

- The **foreigner**, who has lost his home (often through natural calamities or terrible wars) and was forced to migrate to a new country in order to survive.

“Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor.” Zechariah 7:10 (NIV)

WHY are we to be Defenders of the Weak? BECAUSE He is the DEFENDER of the WEAK!

And we are most like Him when we are!

+ I want to close reading **Luke 10:25-37**

One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?” The man answered, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind. And, Love your neighbour as yourself.” “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!” The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus replied with a story: “A man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Levite walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. Then a Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’ “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked. The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.” Luke 10:25–37

+ My closing point is this: The Priest and the Levite, who were members of the upper side of society, the privileged, saw the man on the side of the road, who was a victim of misfortune.

But they passed him by and felt no compassion. They did nothing to help this man who had been a victim of injustice. The Samaritan, when he saw him, was moved to compassion and action. **He did something about it!**

What’s interesting is that Samaritans were the outcast of society. They were used to being treated as lower class. They understood what it was to see the world from the under side of society.

One of the values that we feel God has called our church to pursue is what we call LOVE IN ACTION

We are dedicated to tangibly show the love of God to all, including the hurting, those in need, and those who suffer injustice.

Explain “tangible” (Not just words, not just pity, a hand down from our upper side of society)

But in order for us to “Go and do likewise.” (As Jesus said), to really have compassion (Pity is feeling sorry for – compassion is feeling their pain, feeling their hurt... very different. Jesus had COMPASSION for people)... But in order for us to “Speak up for those who cannot speak, for the rights of the destitute, defend the rights of the poor and needy, the disadvantaged, underprivileged, the weak”, we are going to need a transformation of heart, and humble ourselves, like Jesus humbled himself, and see people as He sees them.

Illustration: A few weeks ago I had lunch with a fairly successful man. In the conversation he asked me, “Why does God allow the poverty, the injustices, the terrible things that happen in the world”. I replied, “I

think the better question is, why do we?" He pause and thought for a minute and then he said, "I never thought about it that way."

Here is the thing, like the Priest, like the Levite, like many of us who have been raised on the upper side of privilege, like myself on many occasions, it's easier to walk by and think "God let it happen" or "He's lazy" or "she's probably sleeping around" or "they're on drugs" or "they're just ripping off the system" or see them as what's wrong with society... **But God sees them as His creation, sons and daughters, born with a destiny, wounded by injustice, misfortune, destroyed by broken homes, absent fathers, victims of verbal, sexual abuse... incest, broken souls loved by Jesus...**

But we will never see it until we have **a heart change!** Until we are able to humble ourselves, step down from the upper side of society and **really** see them with **compassion**.

✚ Something that has been a prayer of mine for a long time is that God would help me see people, really see them... and be moved with compassion... to feel what they feel... to see them like Jesus sees them...

Jesus saw a great multitude and he was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Mark 6:34

He saw below the surface... he saw **CAUSE** and was moved with COMPASSION!

May we see people in Fredericton like Jesus sees them and be moved with compassion!