

Faith in Action: Public Life and Politics
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour Indiana
Pastor Blomenberg
November 1, 2020

Overview: This class seeks to apply God's Word to current issues in public life, helping us be influencers rather than merely reacting to events and trends. We last looked at calls for justice in our society, whether legal, political, social, or economic, in comparison to the Bible's teaching. Today we consider enforcement of the above.

1. Criminal Justice: What it is, and who carries it out, and how.

A. Criminal justice: Are all laws just? By what standards do we measure them?

An increasing number of police departments have purchased "body cameras" in response to complaints that they are unfairly administering justice, such as using excessive force or being racially motivated. Some have called for:

- "Defunding" police departments to invest more dollars in mental health, fighting poverty and addressing other drivers of crime
- Decriminalizing certain non-violent behaviors so less people are arrested
- Reforming sentencing and methods of punishment

B. Implementing Criminal Justice: What is the place of police and judges?

Read Deuteronomy 16:20 (203)

Romans 13:3-5, 8-10 (1206)

What is the responsibility of government and what are the means available?

Is there room for criminal justice reform? Sentences? Crimes?

2. Economic justice:

A. What guidance does Scripture give on economic justice?

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 (1260)

Leviticus 19:13 (124)

Matthew 22:39 (1052)

Matthew 25:34-40 (1056)

Galatians 6:9-10 (1240)

1 John 3:15-18 (1303)

From Rev. Ross Johnson, LCMS, March, 2016, "The State and the Current State of Lutheranism: Serving the Poor – Part 1" *In the early church, Christians called financial help for the poor and needy "love." In fact, "charity" comes from the Latin caritas. For centuries, Christian and congregational help for the poor was called "charity" (Christian love). ... It is this author's belief that the best term for Lutheran congregations to use is*

“Christian Charity” or “Mercy Work/Ministry.” ...It flows directly from the mercy of God to us. Mercy is an undeserved love and blessing which shows itself in love from God to humanity and in a Christian’s love toward neighbor (Ephesians 2:10). Thus, the congregation’s mercy work:

- Cares for all people in their temporal needs (1st article of the Creed).
- Cares for the spiritual redemption of all people (2nd article of the Creed).
- Cares for the soul and spiritual needs of all people (3rd article of the Creed).
- Works primarily through Christians in their vocations and through congregations.

B. How is economic justice to be accomplished?

Read Exodus 23:11 (81)

Exodus 30:15 (90)

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 (202)

Psalms 9:18 (573)

Proverbs 19:17 (688)

Isaiah 58:6-8 (785)

Amos 8:4-6 (977)

Matthew 19:21 (1048)

Mark 14:5-7 (1082)

James 2:3-6 (1289)

What economic justice does God seek, and how?

Is His design that all have the same, that wealth is evil, or genuine generosity?

3. What is “social justice” and who is to enact it?

A. “Social Justice” is a term coined in the 1840s by the Jesuit priest Luigi Taparelli that focuses on an equitable distribution of goods, wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. Since the early 1990s it has gained popularity on university campuses, in international politics, social work, and political activism. The leading secular university primer on social justice theory is Michael J. Sandel’s book, *Social Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?*

- Espouses economic fairness and equality for all people.
- Promotes redistribution of wealth from the wealthiest to the poorest.
- Is done primarily through governmental agencies and non-religious NGOs.
- Has been expanded to include many, divergent “fairness” issues.

B. What fairness should be sought, and by whom?

Read Psalm 82:2-4 (625)

Deuteronomy 16:20 (203)

Next Week: Weighing Pros and Cons of Economic and Political Systems