

## **“Until we See Victory” Matthew 12:15-21**

This morning as we wrap up our “Seek Justice” series on “Racism and the Fierce Urgency of Now,” I know no better way to wrap it up than with a vision of Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, on this and every issue, we want to know the heart of Christ and step into his glowing footprints as he goes before us.

That’s why I want to jump immediately to Matthew 12:15-21. Here we catch a glimpse of Jesus’ mission to not only bring justice, but to do so in a specific way, and to not give up on the work until justice is victorious.

That’s why we’re calling this sermon: “Until we See Victory!”

### **Matthew 12:15-21 (text)**

**The Point: Keep seeking justice, because Jesus is bringing justice to victory.**

This morning, I want us to take a closer look at the justice bringing mission of Jesus. Then, we will consider some very practical steps to be about the good and godly work of anti-racism.

I want to show you 3 ways we can follow Jesus in his justice bringing mission that focus on the what, the how, the visionary motivation of our work. First, the what of our mission...

### **1. Proclaim justice in the power of the Spirit (12:15-18).**

Verse 15 begins by saying Jesus withdrew from there, because he was aware of some important information. Look back at verse 14: “But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.” Let me translate: The religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus because he was an immense threat to their man-made, apparent devotion to God.

When Jesus withdrew, many people followed him and he healed everyone who was sick, but ordered them not to make him known. Why?

- The NASB helps us here by translating the end of verse 16 as: “He healed them all, and warned them *not to tell who He was*.”
- In other words, Jesus is saying: “Don’t give up my identity.” It’s not time! This is what scholars refer to as “the messianic secret,” which makes little sense to our ambitious, capitalistic sensibilities. “C’mon Jesus, the crowds are building. Don’t tell them to be quiet. Tell them to go everywhere shouting: “THE MESSIAH IS HERE!”
- But Jesus knew a focus on his identity would do two things: #1) because the people expected an earthly deliverer, they would try to make him king to overthrow Roman oppression (see John 6:15), and #2) it would expedite his conflict with the Jewish leaders. So he says, “shhh... the time is later, not immediate.”

In all of this, Matthew sees Jesus' healing ministry and the way he goes about his mission as the fulfillment of Isaiah's suffering servant prophecies, as found in Isaiah 42:1-3, one of 10 specific occasions Matthew tells us Jesus is the long expected Messiah.

What do we learn about the mission of Jesus? Verse 18.

"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

- BEHOLD. LOOK. LET YOUR EYES LINGER to truly understand who God's servant is...
- The OT teaches us that the nation of Israel was supposed to be God's servant to bring his truth to the rest of the world, but they failed. That's why God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to launch his rescue mission beyond the borders of Israel.
- God describes his servant as, "chosen, [his] beloved, with whom [his] soul is pleased."
- All this shows us how Jesus served out of a sense of intimacy with his Father.
  - We can hear a distinct echo of God the Father's words from heaven at the baptism of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased."
  - All of our ministry (meaning - how we serve others), must flow out of our identity as sons and daughters of God. It's identity and intimacy, then MINISTRY!
- Listen! When you know God loves you, and nothing in the world can ever change that, it frees you to be fearless and do whatever it is God calls you to do, including our assignment to seek justice! That's Jesus. He had the Father's love *and* the Spirit's power.

I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

- Though Jesus was fully the Son of God, he was also fully a human being. He took on our weaknesses. Jesus, in his humanity, *needed* the Holy Spirit to empower everything he did. If Jesus needed the Spirit every moment, how much more, do we?! Go read Luke 11:1-13.
- What does a Spirit-filled life look like? Proclaiming justice to the Gentiles! That's justice to all people, every nation.
- And what is **justice**? Remember, justice can simply be defined as "**setting things right.**"
- Think about what this means for Jesus. He did not come to right a few wrongs. He came to right every wrong! He came to bring comprehensive justice, the restoration of peace, flourishing, and joy to all who receive his gift.
- Jesus came to put an end to all injustice, all suffering, all evil, which includes racism, wherever it is found.

T: Now it's our privilege to join him by raising our voice for justice as God's Spirit empowers us in our families, friendships, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, cities, and nation. But it's not only about what we do, it's about HOW we do it. #2...

## **2. Seek justice with the meekness & mercy of Jesus (12:19-20).**

Check out vv. 19-20.

Isaiah prophesied: "Jesus will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets." What does this mean?

- It can't mean Jesus never spoke up. It can't mean he never spoke out against injustice. We just read v. 18: "he will proclaim justice." That doesn't sound like silence. :)
- The picture Isaiah gives, and Matthew highlights, is of a humble and gentle Messiah. Jesus refused to retaliate or make threats.
- I mean think about it, Jesus never lost an argument. He could have been the first to pick a fight. It would have been easy for him to quarrel, to call out all of his opponent's errors of judgment and action (which he did at times), but his consistent mode of action was that of meekness and mercy.
- In Jesus, we have the perfect picture of security. He knew who he was. He knew his mission.

That's why verse 20 goes on to say: "a bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not quench."

- This one verse speaks to the meekness and mercy of Christ, perhaps as clearly as any verse in the Bible. Think about it...
- Reeds are the stems of a variety of plants and were known for their frailty. Reeds were weak. A bruised reed is even weaker!
- A smoldering wick or a "faintly burning wick" provides little light or heat. But while many would snuff it out and do away with it, Jesus will not quench the weakest wick, he will not break the bruised reed.

Jesus came to bandage our bruises, to provide fuel for us to burn!

I know many of our black and brown brother and sisters, many people of color feel weary and weak. You may feel like a bruised reed, a smoldering wick today. Look to this Christ! When you feel weak... When you are weak... Jesus sees you & Jesus cares for you. No one understands your situation like Jesus. Others may push you down; his strong arms will reach down to lift you up!

As we think about our efforts to seek justice, through Christ we can exercise the grace of meekness (which is not weakness but humility expressed outwardly toward others). Why? Because we know who we are, we know what we're about. We don't have to answer all the Pharisaical critics, skeptics and cynics who seek to deter or destroy our good work. We take the contrasting position through the contrasting power of Christ to keep moving toward the hurting with his mercy!

And if extending mercy to weak is difficult for you, remember! you are the bruised reed and smoldering wick of verse 20. Jesus has been merciful to us in our weariness, in our sinfulness, and now it's our turn to extend the mercy we've received. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

T: That's how we go about our business. But #3, we find lasting motivation for this work and every good work by...

### **3. Let the victory of justice strengthen every step (12:20-21).**

How committed is your God to justice? Jesus won't stop until justice is victorious!

Verses 18-21 one more time.

"until he brings justice to victory."

- Some translations say: "Until He leads justice to victory." (NASB) or "Finally he will cause justice to be victorious." (NLT)
- But... the words "brings" or "leads" or "cause" is too weak. The word ἐκβάλῃ typically means "thrusts forth" or "to forcefully bring something about." It is the same verb used 4 times in the next section of Matthew 12 for "casting out" demons!

Do you see the vision of Christ? It is a vision of victory! Justice wins. Jesus is working to bring justice, now through his people, in part, and when he returns, in comprehensive fashion!

- Listen, we will never see perfect justice in this life, but that doesn't mean we don't work for it! And we work for it, knowing that Jesus will bring what no political party can bring: perfect justice!
- The banner of Justice will not hang from the rafters of the Gahden, but will fill the sky! His justice will cover the earth.

Let's keep it real. The fact justice must be brought to victory implies there is a struggle to get there. It doesn't come easy in a world full of brokenness and sin. In a world where God's enemy, Satan, and his kingdom of darkness still exerts powerful influence.

That's why we keep fighting and persevere in the work of seeking justice, with the vision justice's ultimate victory

But let's not miss verse 21. The justice Jesus is bringing is not just social justice in how people relate to other people, but also divine justice in how people relate to God.

- He's setting right our relationship with God. If we received justice from God, we'd be separated from him forever, BUT Jesus took our punishment on the cross, so that, in the words of Romans 3:26, God might be both JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- That's what verse 21 is talking about: "and in his name the Gentiles will hope."
- Eugene Peterson says: "Before you know it, his justice will triumph; the mere sound of his name will signal hope, even among far-off unbelievers." (Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*)
- Matthew paraphrases Isaiah 42:4 to help us see how Jesus is the hope of the entire world! The nations hope in him, because only Jesus has the power to set all things right. Jesus is the only hope for global peace and for us to experience peace with God.

But HOW does he accomplish it? Not through a vocal, political campaign. Not through forceful revolution. By dying in our place, winning the victory through his death and resurrection!

T: Let the victory of justice strengthen every step.

*Conclusion:*

We started this series by considering... **4 Different Hearts**

- 1. Racist**
- 2. Racially Indifferent**
- 3. Racial Reconciler**
- 4. Anti-Racist**

1. Is Evil. 2. Is Sinful. 3. Is Progress, but 3 AND 4 is where we want to live.

### **How is God leading you to seek justice?**

It's not enough to have a heart for equality. It's not enough to have a heart for justice. WE MUST SEEK IT.

### **How is God leading you to seek justice?**

Don't sit on the sidelines. Decide now to take your next step, your next steps! And no one will be able to say, "I don't know what to do," because I'm sharing a list of over 20 possibilities - right now. :)

#### **Actions Related to Personal Racism**

1. Pray Psalm 139:23-24 regularly: "Search me, O God, and know my heart!"
2. Speak up and take a stand whenever, however, and wherever injustice occurs, especially among friends and family.
3. Grab a recommended resource, read with humility and discernment, and take accountable action.
4. Make sure your children have an understanding of the sin of racism.
5. *Learn about our local history in Medford & Boston.*
6. *Commit to growth for the next 12 months.*

#### **Actions Related to Interpersonal Racism**

1. Build relationships by sharing meals with people who do not look like you.
2. Ask People of Color about their experience in various contexts and listen humbly and carefully.
3. Extend empathy and lament with POC when acts of injustice occur.

#### **Actions Related to Structural Racism**

1. Support the work, art, and businesses of the black community & POC.
2. Look for mentorship opportunities of minorities in your professional work.
3. Ask for a racial diversity training or join an inclusion committee in your workplace.

4. Promote the perspectives and voices of POC.
5. *Join your school committee or PTO to be a voice for justice.*
6. *Find a passionate individual in a specific sphere of influence and support their work.*
7. *Advocate for fair hiring policies and the end of representational racism.*

#### Actions Related to Representational Racism

1. Follow black leaders, POC, and solid justice organizations on social media.

#### Actions Related to Systemic Racism

1. Volunteer at a local non-profit serving minority groups (e.g. Medford Youth Center).
2. Volunteer for local government initiatives seeking racial justice (we will give you a reference).
3. When it comes to social justice issues (and all issues), be an informed voter.
4. Donate to equal justice initiatives (eg. bail funds - 50% of lower level offenders can't afford \$500 bail).
5. Evaluate environments for inclusivity.
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#### Additional Actions in our Church

1. Join our next Equip Group on racial justice.
2. Get more involved in mercy ministry opportunities through RHC.
3. Support a church planter doing work in black and brown neighborhoods.
4. Start or join a prayer gathering or peaceful protest for racial justice.
5. Find a way for your Community Group to take action together. Pray & Act.
6. Partner with other Christians and churches to display kingdom unity and seek racial justice.
7. Share the hope of the gospel with humble boldness.

How is God leading you to seek justice?

Let's join Jesus in his mission to bring justice to victory by reflecting the anti-racist heart of God.

Pray.