

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 11 Jun 2023

Sermon Title : Do Justice to Agape

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : Psalm 145:14-20

INTRODUCTION

“Do Justice” – (i) To show something in a way that is as good as it should be; (ii) To try to show something of its true qualities; (iii) To show the glory of the real thing. No one person can do justice to the glory of God. No matter how good a person’s work or ministry is, no one is able to show the full extent of God’s love. No matter how detailed a person’s sermon is, no one is able to do justice to God’s Glory.

Agape

Before the time of Christ, the word “agape” did not mean divine love as we understand it today. If red were used to signify hot eros love, blue for warm storge love and green for virtuous phileo love, the neutral agape love would be represented by no colour. It was a colourless neutral word used for any love with no attachment. The Greeks did not have any concept of love for one’s enemies. It is an alien concept as it is not natural for humans to “love your enemy”. And it is precisely because of the neutrality of this word “agape”, that biblical writers picked it to describe Jesus’ concept of love for the enemy and to show divine love. Only God can empower and enable us to do so. If we call Jesus our Lord and Saviour, we will allow the Holy Spirit to spring-clean us so we can have “agape” in us to love Him and love others.

2 Reasons to Do Justice to Agape

1. Agape means more than love your enemies

God’s agape is infinite and no one can fully comprehend it but what we have missed is: We are to love the people whom we cannot stand, but do we need to agree with people before we love them?

We are living in the world with values that are sometimes in total conflict with our Christian values. The Christian worldview is very different from the world’s view. What we consider immoral can be perfectly alright with the world’s view. In fact, we may have friends and relatives whose lifestyle we disagree with. Can we still agape them if we disagree with them? Some may say, “Love the sinner but hate the sin”. Let’s look at some concrete examples:

- a. A business associate cheated you of a lot of money. Do you still love the person?
- b. Your brother has an affair and abandons his wife and children for the other

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woman. Do you stop loving him?

- c. Your child says that he/she has same sex attraction and wants to live a lifestyle totally contrary to your values. You cannot agree with him/her at every level. Do you stop loving him/her?

The polarized world's response would be:

- I hate you if you do not agree with my opinion.
- I am for social justice, I fight for equality; for the discriminated and marginalized due to skin colour, occupation, sexual preference and ideology. If you are not with me, you are my enemy and I will "cancel you".
- You do not have to agree with people to love them – You can still love them if their values, worldview or lifestyles are in direct conflict with you.

2. Agape is also doing Justice(Psalm 145:14-20)

Part 1: Universal Grace (Psalm 145:14-17)

- God's love to all He has created – He upholds all who fall, opens His hand to everyone and satisfies all our hunger and desire. This is common grace and is available to everyone.
- God gives wisdom to everyone, moral intuition to everyone, appreciation of beauty to all, knowledge of God to all. God's invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and everyone is without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)
- The gift of salvation is universal, available to everyone – prevenient grace or gift that is available to a person before he is saved:
Jesus is God's Christmas gift given to us for our humanity; Jesus' death is God's Good Friday gift given to us for the atonement of our sins; Jesus' resurrection is God's Easter gift to us for our redemption as children of God; God pouring the Holy Spirit on us on Pentecost is God's gift for our restoration as the image of God.
This gift of grace can be available but does not necessarily mean it will be accepted.
- God's gift is available for both believers and non-believers. God opens His hand and satisfies the hunger and desire of every living thing would mean He satisfies not just our physical but mental and spiritual desires.

God, the giver of the gift, is righteous not in some but all ways; God is kind, not in some works but in all His works, and that would include the work of Christ on the Cross, His Resurrection, Ascension as well as the pouring of His Holy Spirit. (vv.16-17)

Part 2: Gifts (grace) need to be unwrapped and accepted (Psalm 145:18-19)

- Gifts are available but the recipient must unwrap and accept the gifts.

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- Those who call on Him (v18) - meaning those who accept His truth, who trust and believe in Him, who have a relationship with Him. Those who call upon Him are those who love and fear Him. (v19)

Agape of God is a gift for everyone who is made in the image of God but it remains wrapped unless it is unwrapped and accepted by faith.

Part 3: God will destroy some of those He loves (Psalm 145:20)

- There is a change of mood from the earlier verses. From “God will preserve all who love Him” (vv.14-19) to “but all the wicked He will destroy” (v20).
- This same change in mood is found in other parts of the Bible both in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT). OT e.g. from blessings to curses where God’s wrath and destruction will overtake us instead of His love and blessings, for those who do not obey Him. (Deuteronomy 28)
- It is easier to preach on God’s blessings than on curses. To do justice to agape would mean preaching about His “just agape”. Love and justice are two sides of the same coin of agape. If we talk about agape we must also talk about justice.
- NT e.g. God’s love in sending Jesus to redeem us (John 3:16) but God’s wrath will condemn those who do not believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:18-19). Just like Psalm 145, this shows God’s love and judgment in the same breath.

God loves everyone who calls upon, loves and fears Him but those who reject His gifts, God will destroy. We must repent and turn from our wayward way or we will be judged by God because love and justice are two sides of the same coin. Punishment is retributive justice and that is the job of the judge and law enforcer. Jesus will come back as Judge and that is His job at the End Time.

Justice

Justice does not only mean punishment.

- To do justice would also mean to show them their true but unrealized qualities. To show the original true glory which is the very image of God which we have fallen from and distorted - the image of God that we are made in His likeness, because we are no longer doing justice to or reflecting the glory of the real thing.
- The difference between justice in the world and the justice of God is that the world’s justice is retributive justice and God’s justice is restorative justice. God’s restorative justice restores us to God through Jesus.

Jesus did not agree with the people that He loved and died for but loves them regardless. We do not have to agree with everyone, but we must inspire them and show them they can realize their true qualities as the image of God.

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CONCLUSION

There is no way we can do justice to the love of God because God's love is infinite and agape love is an alien concept to humans. However, God has revealed to us through His Holy Spirit that love and justice are two sides of agape. Let us show agape and hope for the glory of the real thing for those we cannot stand or oppose us, doing justice to them by inspiring them to be restored to the original form of the image of God. We can only do this through the infilling of the Holy Spirit to empower us because nothing is impossible with God.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
 - 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
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2. Appoint someone to read Psalm 145:14-20 aloud.
Love and justice are two sides of agape. What do you understand about agape now?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your testimony on how by the Holy Spirit's empowerment, you could show agape to someone even though you do not agree with the person's worldview, lifestyle or values. Include how your agape love has impacted the person's relationship with God.

OR

Give thanks to God for His justice which is restorative instead of retributive so we can be restored to Him through Jesus.

6. With a prayer partner, commit all that you have shared to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill and empower you to show agape love even when you do not agree with someone.

Pray also for your group and our church to always do justice to agape by living out love and justice so we may inspire each other and those outside of our church to be restored to the original form of the image of God.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Servant King – Awaken Generation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fT0DIMxPVoc>
2. God I Look To You – Bethel Music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3u3ZG8ztGEI>
3. How Deep The Father's Love For Us – Stuart Townend
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0CDqG5STPM>

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