

19th Sunday after Pentecost
October 15, 2017
Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32
God's Justice is Inarguable
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Dearly loved by God in Christ Jesus,

Things aren't going your way. You are suffering the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' in the Bard's words. Someone else has fouled up and you have to bear the consequences. What three little words come to mind, and maybe fall from your lips? It's not fair!

Fairness and justice are elusive qualities in this life. This is true except with God. We might well question the unfairness and injustice we endure at the hands of others. It is a sin to accuse God of anything other than being just. God is only and always righteous and just.

You and I are guilty of the sin of accusing God of being unjust, most assuredly, more than once. What is worry after all? What are complaint and questioning God's representatives? What are covetousness and lust and jealousy? Every one of those sins is just another way of accusing God of being unfair.

God is not unjust. We are unjust, God is not unrighteous. We are unrighteous. God does not need to turn from his ways and change. We need to repent and turn from sin so that our souls do not die. This is the lesson the LORD God taught his exiled people in Babylon through the prophet Ezekiel.

Open your hearts to this lesson, **God's Justice is Inarguable**. God's justice stands the test against false accusations. His justice is the basis for God's judgment.

A well-known proverb was going around among the Israelites in exile six centuries before Jesus was born. "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Get it? The father's action bears a reaction in the children. Dad bites into a sour grape and the bitterness puckers up the children's mouths. The exiles wrongly believed their exile was on account of the sins of their fathers, not their own. So, they cried out, "The way of the Lord is not just."

Their accusation would have been true had their premise been valid. It was invalid. Their premise was that God is not just and so his justice is arguable. This is a false accusation. God's justice is inarguable. He is the holy and just God. What God says and does are true and right. No good thought, no good plan, no good argument ever began with Satan's lie that God is not just.

God put a stop to the sin of thinking that I must bear some consequence for my father's sin. No, I must bear the consequence of my sins. "The soul who sins is the soul who will die." I deserve eternal death in hell because I have sinned as we just confessed. Every living soul belongs to God. Our souls belong to him as do our parents' souls. The death I deserve and from which God has redeemed me through the holy blood of Christ is mine and no one else's. This justice stands the test against false accusations.

God asks two questions to show that his justice is inarguable. "O house of Israel, is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust." In fact, God asks Israel twice to close their mouths before him. Listen to those questions ringing in your ears the next time you want to say to God, "It's not fair." What is not just is your sin of thinking God is not just.

As if we had to worry, or complain, or be dissatisfied with the way God takes care of us. God is not a man that he should lie. God does not change his mind about his promises of daily bread and the forgiveness of our sins. God does not chasten us because of something our parents did. He chastens us because he loves us and takes not pleasure in the death of our souls.

That leads us to the second reason God's justice is inarguable. God's justice is the only basis for his judgment.

The righteous Judge declares, "I will judge you each one according to his ways...Repent. Turn away from all your offenses then sin will not be your downfall". Remember that our ways -our actions of love or offense that are sin- come from the heart. Repentance is contrition and faith. It is the acknowledgement of sin and guilt, and trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness in the heart.

Every soul belongs to God. He wants every soul to turn from sin. This applies to the unbeliever as the Spirit calls him or her to faith. It applies to the believer who battles daily to keep the sinful nature curbed so it does not let love for sin drive out faith.

When we consider the sins that lead to our downfall and turn away from sin and do what is right in true repentance then sin will not be our downfall. With David we pray for "a new heart and a new spirit" God asks, "Why will you die?" There is no reason to die. God has given us forgiveness and offers us new life in Christ Jesus. God takes no pleasure in the spiritual death of anyone. He has provided his one and only Son to be your Savior and mine.

Our gospel helps us see what God is saying through Ezekiel. Jesus in his parable taught about the one son who said I'll do right and did nothing. The other son said I will do nothing but turned from that and obeyed his father. Jesus was showing the difference between the self-righteousness of the Pharisees to whom repentance was a completely foreign concept, and the humble repentance of sinners who came to see their wicked ways and trust in Jesus as the Savior for forgiveness.

The law brings us to contrition, the gospel creates faith in Jesus. Whoever believes in Jesus receives the benefit of Jesus' redemptive work. The believer shows that righteousness of Christ in his heart by turning away from sin. The same soul that dies on account of sin has new life on account of Jesus Christ. This is God's justice. It is the basis for his judgment.

"Repent and live". Amen. SDG>