

Sermon Transcript from May 15th, 2016
The Hope & Plan of God
Pastor Dave Lomas, Reality San Francisco

So, last week we began this series on "The Life of the Prophets." There's a whole section in your Bible – kind of in the middle of your Bible – given to the prophetic life and the prophetic voice and the prophetic witness of the Prophets. If you desire to understand God and understand the Scriptures, the Prophets are a very important component of that. The prophet to Israel was like our modern day filmmaker or our modern day musician or even, oftentimes, our comedian – think maybe Louis C.K. or John Oliver – who uses their craft to capture the intensity and the emotion of a particular historical moment in our society and call people to wake up. So, comedians do this, sharp comedians do this, filmmakers do this, musicians do this. They try to grab with their emotion, their timing, their music, their art, their craft, to grab a moment and tell our world or, specifically even our nation, to wake up.

This is what a prophet did to Israel. And it wasn't just to wake up in a general sense, it was to wake up to the covenants of God; wake up to the faithfulness of God; wake up to what they were called to be as Israel. So, if you don't understand that, it's hard to get through the Prophets and understand what they're talking about. All these forms of art, like filmmaking or music or comedy, can offer a critique on our society. And I think they do that with emotion that should make us react.

I think of this year's Grammy's in February and Kendrick Lamar's Grammy performance a couple months ago. He captured in that performance – if you've seen it online or you were watching it live – the rage of our current cultural climate of racism and violence in his act. If you've seen this performance, if you understand what he's doing in this performance, his lyrics, the set design, the music, the dissonant jazz arrangements during these three parts of a song, the costumes and the last part of him standing in front of the stage, just him alone with the spotlight rapping, yelling, angry and, at the very end, ending with a call to live differently. If you saw that and understand all the emotion that went into that, if you can understand that just in a small part, then you can kind of get what's going on in the ministry of Israel's prophets. They were like that, but calling Israel emotionally and theologically back to faithfulness to God.

The reason why the Prophets are so angsty and so emotional is because they're capturing the heart of God in their prophesies. They're capturing God's emotion, God's heart, what God's feeling. This is what a prophet is doing. Prophets reveal God's inner life, they disclose God's pathos. Like, they disclose what God's feeling emotionally and why is God emotionally reacting the way He is towards Israel. Why does God seem angry? Why does God call Israel faithless? Why is God going to judge Israel? Why is God doing these things? And a prophet is revealing the inner life of God; what's stirring God up emotionally for Him to act.

So, when the Prophets are angry, it's because God is angry. When the Prophets are sad, it's because God is sad. When the Prophets are hopeful, it's because God is hopeful. So, the Prophets almost step in between God and man and are like an intermediary between both of them and they're disclosing each other's heart to one another. The Prophets are disclosing God's heart to people and then, oftentimes, the Prophets will disclose the people's heart to God and what's going on to God.

Like Abraham Heschel has said in his book on the Prophets, he said:

"The main task of prophetic thinking is to bring the world into divine focus."

So, the main task of prophetic thinking is to bring all of the world, especially Israel, into divine focus. Prophetic thinking brings God's thoughts and emotions to bear on the world. Specifically, Israel. How does God feel? How does God think? What does He think about what's going on in the world? How does God feel about what's going on in the world? And this is what the Prophets are answering. So, before we answer this question like, "What does God feel or what does God think," we have to set some context and we tried to do a little bit of this last week because God's thoughts and even God's emotions don't just happen like isolated. They're connected to context.

So, here's the context of prophetic literature. You might want to write this down. This is like the technical notes stuff that you would, if you take notes, write this down. The three main themes of the Prophets are this – so, these are like, if I had three buckets up here, if I use props, I don't, but if I did I would have them up here. Three buckets. And you could put any of the prophetic writings or any part of any of the prophetic writings into one of these three buckets. They are this: accusation, warning and hope.

That's what every prophet is doing in some part of their literature. You could put the writings of parts of Isaiah – if you're reading Isaiah and you're like, "What is this?" You should be able to put it in accusation, "Oh, they're accusing Israel. Oh, no no no. They're bringing warning. Oh, no. They're bringing hope."

This is what they're all doing in the Prophets. Accusation. This is accusing Israel of covenant failure. So, whenever it seems like there's some anger towards God's people, it's because there is this accusation – and we talked about this last week – of Israel failing the covenant. Think Hosea and God being cheated on, Israel breaking the covenant and God, as a spouse who's been cheated on, is saying, "Why weren't you faithful to the vows you made to me? Why aren't you faithful to the covenant that you made to me? We had plans together. Why aren't you living up to them?"

So, they're accusing Israel of worshipping false gods and, therefore, injustice starts to happen in Israel and throughout the world. So, the Prophets are accusing.

But, another thing that the Prophets are doing is they're warning. They're saying, "If you do not repent, if you do not turn to the Lord your God, if you do not live under the stipulations of the covenant, God is going to bring – He has to bring about justice. God must act justly and deal with Israel's injustice on a national scale. So, if you don't repent, if you don't turn, your land's going to be taken from you."

This is why our prophetic readings are broken up if you're reading along with us. They're broken up like before exile to Babylon and after exile from Babylon. Beforehand, it's a warning. "Guys. Wake up. If you do not wake up, the warning is that you'll be in exile."

The second half is, "Wake up, because this is what God did to you. Remember that God did this and He can do it again. God is serious about His warnings."

The last part – and I think this might round out a lot of our conversation today – is hope. The Prophets bring about God's hope of mercy on the other side of justice and that one day God will restore not just Israel, but God will restore the whole world through Israel. So, think here "Messiah" and "new covenant." That's kind of what the Prophets do as well. With that in mind, let's read Isaiah 5. Okay?

So, this is Isaiah's song. It says, if you have a Bible, it might say something like "The Song of the Vineyard" or "Isaiah's Song" or something like that. But think, this is Isaiah's Grammy performance, okay? So, this is Isaiah's song to Israel.

It says this in Isaiah 5:1: **"I will sing for the one I love..."** – the one he loves is Yahweh; God – **"...a song about his vineyard;"** – his vineyard is Israel.

"I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard; My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

"He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines.

"He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well.

"Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

"What more could have been done for my vineyard that I have done for it?

"When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?

"Now I will tell you what I am going to do with my vineyard.

"I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed;

"I will break down its walls, and it will be trampled.

"I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there.

"I will command the clouds not to rain on it."

Stop there. Crazy song, right? You're like, "Doesn't really rhyme. Sounds really harsh."

This is Isaiah's song to Israel. He's like, "Hey, guys. I wrote a song for you. Would you like to hear it?"

You know? And then he starts singing this song and they're like, "Whoa. I think this is kind of offensive."

God plants a vineyard on this fertile hillside and God worked hard to get Israel rooted and established, planted with the choicest fruits. God's like, "I did everything I could to give you guys a good shot at this thing."

Think "Call of Abraham." Think "Exodus." Think "Promised Land." Like, "I called Abraham and he was nothing and I made him a nation. And then you were enslaved in Egypt and I brought you out. And then I brought you into a promised land and I've given you a land and a nation and my presence. Look what I've done for you. This is what I've done for you. And then I built a watchtower. I want to protect this vineyard."

And he built a winepress to make good win from the grapes that He would expect to come out of good soil and good vines. Like, "I gave you good soil. I gave you good irrigation. I gave you good vines. I'm a good vinedresser. I'm involved. I'm a good vine manager."

Like, he has every reason to succeed. Think like the Torah or the Law. Like, God's given them a plan to live as a kingdom people; given them a plan to flourish; given them a plan to live justly and rightly in the nation that God called them to. So, God has set Israel up to completely be a blessing to the whole world and then He goes at harvest to get what He expects to be good fruits. Like, "Okay, I'm going to the harvest now and you've had good soil and good irrigation and a good vinedresser and good vines and good seed. You have every reason to succeed here."

And then he goes there and it yielded only bad fruit. There was only bad people there. And what did God encounter or what did God consider to be the problem? So, when He goes there to find good fruit, what's the problem? Why wasn't it good? Look at verse 7. The song ends right here.

Isaiah 5:7: **"The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in.**

"And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress."

He looked for justice. Wasn't there. And He looked for righteousness. Now, these two words, righteousness and justice, frame up why the Prophets are so mad with Israel and, therefore, why God is so mad with Israel. The Hebrew word there for "righteousness" and "justice" is "tsedaqah" and "mishpat." And they are probably the two biggest words in the Old Testament, used over 200 times in the Old Testament. These words are very very important to the people of God, and the roots go all the way back to the calling of Abraham. So, I'm going to bring you back to the calling of Abraham one more time. If you're getting sick of this, too bad. I don't know what to say. Like, you guys have to understand Genesis and the call of Abraham to understand what's going on in the rest of the Bible.

So, I'm going to bring you back there again one more time. Okay? It's kind of dry, but hopefully at the end you'll be totally convicted. Okay. So, these are the words. They go all the way back to Israel. Remember, Abraham had promised – we talked about this last week – though Abraham doesn't have children, God will make Abraham a nation. And though he doesn't have land, God will give him a land. And though he doesn't have, at this point, God's presence, God says, "I will be with you. I will, I will, I will."

So, this is what God says in Genesis 18:18 to him: **"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him."**

Remember? That's the goal. That's what God wants to do. "I'm going to bless the world through you and your nation.

"For I have chosen him [Abraham], so that..."

If you have a Bible open and if you want to turn there and if you want to underline "so that," that is very very important. God called and saved Abraham and blessed Abraham "so that." There is a reason why God does it. There is a purpose that God is trying to accomplish.

"So that he will direct his children and his household [nation; people; Israel] after him to keep the way of the Lord..."

God has called Abraham so that him and his children, therefore the nation of Israel, would keep the way of the Lord. How do you keep the way of the Lord?

"...By doing what is right and just."

Tsedaqah and mishpat. "I am calling you, as my people, to follow in my way by doing righteousness and justice..."

"...so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Okay. So, let me break this down for you. We already know that God is going to bless Abraham and the reason why God is going to bless Abraham is because God wants to bless the world. God's like, "I'm going to bless the entire world and I'm going to do that," because God doesn't really act outside of people. He partners with humanity to bring about His plans. That's what He does. If you don't like that, talk to God about it. That's just the way He does it.

So he's like, "I'm going to bless the world and I'm going to do it through Abraham."

So, he partners with Abraham to do it and he goes, "Okay. This is how I'm going to bring about my blessing upon the world. I need you and your descendants to do tsedaqah and mishpat. I need you to do righteousness and justice. And, if you do righteousness and justice, I am going to, through your people, bless the entire world."

God will bless the world through Abraham, and the question is, "How will God bless the world?"

Through creating, by grace, a community of righteousness and justice. This was the immediate purpose of the election of Abraham. "Through you and your people, I am going to execute righteousness and justice. I'm going to create a community of your people to live righteously and justly."

What God is saying is this: "I saved you from something and I saved you to something. I saved you from something and I saved you so that you can live into something. I save you to be righteous and just; to act righteously and justly."

Now, let me clarify something here. Some of you guys immediately are thinking when I say righteousness you will say, "Oh, I think what you might do here is, by the end of this teaching, say, 'Oh, we can't be righteous outside of Jesus,' and then flip the whole thing around and then drop the Gospel bomb and then like, 'Oh, I need Jesus.'"

And that's true. You do. You need Jesus, by the way. This is a Jesus church. So, yes. You need Jesus. And you expect me to say something about how you can't be righteous to get to God by yourself and you need the righteousness of Christ. And that is true. And you can say that as it pertains to your salvation. Righteousness, in Scripture, has several dimensions. So, there isn't just a righteousness that I am saved through – that is one part of righteousness. But, there are other dimensions of righteousness. Let me show you how this is.

The first dimension of righteousness that we get is the forgiveness and acceptance sense. I am righteous before God, I am forgiven and accepted. Meaning I am fully a child of God because of what Christ has done. This has to do with identity. There is no amount of good works that can earn me favor with God. I cannot do righteous deeds to go to God and say, "God, I've done all the righteous deeds. I've done all the things. Now, accept me."

That's not how we get to God. That is kind of a works-based system or religion to get to God and to say, "I'm clean before God because I'm clean or I've done righteous things."

That's not how we do it. It's by God's grace. It's God stepping into our story and calling us and calling us to follow Him, making us righteous through Christ and what He's done on the cross to atone for our sins. But, there's a second sense of righteousness and the second sense is moral character. I think we squirm away from this one. We slither out of this one. We kind of go, "Well, I'm righteous because of Christ. Therefore, I'm good, right? Like, I don't really have to grow moral character. I can just do what I want and God bless it no matter what."

This is like growing in God-like character. This is the dimension of righteousness that God is looking for in His people. This is both an Old Testament concept and a New Testament concept. If you don't believe me, write down 2 Peter 1:1-9 and read it later. That is Peter working this idea out. There are two dimensions of righteousness. I'm saved and then I work out my salvation. I actually put every effort towards working in and working out my salvation.

So, for the people of God, Old Testament and New Testament, we are brought into the family of God by grace. We have a righteousness that's given to us, not based on our moral record but on God's. That is the first sense of the word righteousness. But now, as a people of God, we are to be people of righteousness. This is what Israel was called to be, a people of righteousness. That's not a bad word. I'm not talking about self-righteousness. God expects righteousness and justice from His people.

This is what Israel is getting busted on in the Prophets. Prophets show up and say, "Israel, the plan all along was to bless the world through you and you were supposed to live righteously and justly and you have not. You have not lived righteously and justly."

Now, what do those words mean? Here's a quote from a theologian. He says this. I'm describing these words, this couplet, righteousness and justice. He says this:

"Righteousness is a pattern of life, not merely specific acts. What is at stake is personhood, not merely performance. Disposition rather than mere deeds. Character behind and beyond conduct. This kind of life and behavior has a religious dimension as well as an ethical one. Since the righteousness depends on the Lord, righteousness refers to the moral quality that establishes right order, and justice refers to the moral quality that restores that order when disturbed. The righteous are willing to disadvantage themselves to advantage the community. The wicked are willing to disadvantage the community to advantage themselves."

Why is God so mad? Remember Israel's song. The Lord goes to a community that He created expecting to find a community, a society, committed to that righteousness, to moral quality that establishes right order; to justice that refers to the moral quality that restores it when order is disturbed. So, when there's disorder or injustice, justice acts upon that injustice and says, "Let's restore this rightly. Let's bring this back to God's design."

So, God goes to His community and He expects to find a society that's committed to this kind of righteousness and this kind of justice which reflects God's own character. A society that fulfills all His hopes and having planted them in the first place. And God goes there and God doesn't go there as a spectator, He is fully involved. Remember, He is an involved vine manager. He is involved in everything. See, sin isn't like a violation of God's Law and God just sits there like a judge and watches us and judges us. When we mess up, God is intimately involved. God is like involved in Israel and trying to bring about their redemption. God is deeply involved.

So, God goes to this vineyard, Israel, and He sees only bad fruit. What He wants to see is righteousness and justice and what He sees is bloodshed. What He sees is people taking advantage of each other. What He sees is that the powerful keep getting more powerful and oppressing the poor and those vulnerable in society. And society is all out of whack. How can Israel be a light to the nations if their society is all out of whack? How can they be?

So, what we do is this as Christians. Now, I'm going to jump here from Old Testament to New Testament. I'm going to jump from Israel to the Church. Okay? Are you with me? I'm just going to [whistles] jump. Okay? So, we're here now. The Church. Real quick, let me just – we're here as a church. So, in the prophetic ministry of Jesus, Jesus does the same sort of thing – we'll get to it in a second – where He gets angry at people for turning following God into something it was never supposed to be. And so, Jesus calls the Church in the same way with the same prophetic angst and edge as the Prophets did in His day. And the Prophets don't

call Israel out as much as they call Israel back. They don't call them out, He calls them back. They're like, "Would you come back to covenant faithfulness? Would you come back to being a light to the world?"

And so, church, we are – and again, if you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, I mean, you're kind of off the hook today. I mean, you're on a different hook, but I'm not going to talk about that hook. I'm going to talk about this hook here. I'm talking about the church. So, if you are a part of the Church, a follower of Jesus, you have an obligation to live into a certain way of life because this is what Christ saved you for and to. And when you don't do that, we cease to be a light to the world. We stop being a light to the world. We cease being a light to the nations. We cease being salt. We cease being that agent in the world for God's Kingdom advancement. We become a people for ourselves. We become a people that get so involved with what we're doing and think that Jesus died to save us or me individually and take me individually into heaven when I die and we've truncated the story of the Bible so much that we don't even know up from down anymore. We have to stop doing that.

So, in this prophetic movement, we have to hear the prophetic word to us as well as followers of Jesus today and go in which way today – today as followers of God – are we living unjustly and unrighteously and therefore God has the same sort of rebuke to us saying, "I came to my Church and I looked and I looked for fruit and I found no fruit. I looked for a good fruit because I gave them my Son's blood. I gave them the Spirit of the Living God. I gave them all these things to have the ability and the power and the Christian community to live righteousness and justice and all I've found was bad fruit."

You have to understand the heart of God. The program of God is actually to bring about the redemption of the world. That's what God's doing. C.S. Lewis captures it really well in *Mere Christianity*. He says this. He kind of starts by talking about something else, but he gets to it. Let me just read it to you.

"If you do not take the distinction between good and bad very seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But of course, if we think some things really bad and God really good, then you cannot talk like that. You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some things we see are contrary to His will."

So, C.S. Lewis is combatting this thing like, "All the horror and all the atrocious things that happen in the world, it's God. It's all God." C.S. Lewis is like, "Uh, no. You can call some things evil and that's not God's will."

"Confronted with a cancer or a slum, the Pantheist can say, 'If you could only see it from a divine point of view, you would realize that this is also God.'"

"The Christian reply:" – this is so good – "Don't talk damned nonsense..." – Oh, I love it – "...for Christianity is a fighting religion. It thinks God made the world, that space and time and heat and cold and all the colors and tastes and all the animals and vegetables are things God made up out of His head as a man makes up a story. But, it also thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists (and insists very loudly) on our putting them right again."

What C.S. Lewis is saying is that God sees evil in the world and God sees atrocious things in the world and God doesn't look at them and go, "Eh, they're good."

He's like, "They're not good. And what I'm doing is I'm calling a people to partner with me to put them right again, to live righteously, to live justly, to put the world to right again."

When we are not doing this, there is a full breakdown of righteousness and justice. And I think this is important to understand to know God's character. Because, knowing that this is what God is trying to do, this is actually what God is trying to do in the Scriptures, is to bring about the reconciliation and the redemption of the entire world. This is what God is doing through Jesus and what Jesus is doing, by the power of the Spirit, through the Church is to bring about His redemption. When we understand that, then our concept of God gets shaped around that.

A.W. Tozer, a mystic writer – gosh, one of my favorite writers – says this:

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The greatest question – the gravest question – before the Church is always God Himself and the most significant fact about any man is not what he, at any given time,

might say or do, but what he, in his deep heart, conceives God to be like. We tend, by a secret law of the soul, to move toward our mental image of God."

The reason why I bring that up here is what is your mental image of God? Is it a God who is after giving you good things and then taking you to heaven when you die? Then you will start moving towards that and it will all become this individualistic, "It's only about me and my own personal relationship with God and I'm on a journey to get to heaven only. And then, when I die, I get there. God, save me from this world."

Is that your concept of God or a God who is after the healing of the nations; the healing of the world that has gone very very bad? The Prophets think it's the latter. The Prophets think that God is after the redemption of a world that has gone wrong and God insists (and insists very loudly) that we partner with Him. So, God will, because Israel isn't living into their calling, discipline Israel. He will allow His judgment to come upon them for their purification, to remove idolatry and injustice and false worship.

The picture that Isaiah gives is a land that's laid waste, or a land that is scorched by fire. Fire comes through the land and destroys it. And then, loggers come through and chop down the rest of the forest. That's Isaiah's picture. Joel – you read this a couple weeks ago – uses the imagery of an army of locusts that come through Israel and eat the entire land and nothing is left. That's the image that the Prophets paint. It's tragic. It's saying that exile is inevitable and it's sad. All that Israel had to bless the world is basically gone because of judgment. They're no longer really a "nation." They have no real king. They're under enemy occupation and exile. They no longer have land, they're in exile to Babylon. They're no longer God's presence. The temple was destroyed. So, is there any hope?

Now, this sets up the hope of the Prophets. Turn to Isaiah 10 at the end. This sets up the hope of the Prophets; the Prophets giving Israel hope that this is not the end. And it starts in verse 33.

It says this: **"See, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will lop off the boughs..."** – I don't know what that word is – **"...with great power."**

"The lofty trees will be felled, the tall ones will be brought low."

"He will cut down the forest thickets with an ax; Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One."

So, that's that image, right? So, fire rips through it. That's Isaiah 6. And then, in chapter 10, every single part of the land, all the trees get laid out. So, you can imagine in the land everything is scorched and there's only stumps left. Israel's laid bare. But then, here's the hope.

Isaiah 11:1: **"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."**

What this is talking about – and this is beautiful – is that the imagery of this tree that has been cut off (the tree is Israel), cut down and burned and scorched. The scorched stump. Then, all of a sudden, a little shoot comes from it. And the stump, we're told, is Jesse. Now, Jesse is the father of King David, and the Prophets do not say that this little shoot comes up from the stump of King David, it's saying that we're getting a new King David. We're getting a king in King David's place to be a better King David. It's like the story's starting all over again. Jesse is having a new son; a new David.

Who is this new David?

It says in Isaiah 11:2, **"The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him [this new David]—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord."**

"He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth."

Righteousness and justice will be how he leads.

"He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist."

Who is this? This is Jesus. This is the world's hope. Messiah. So, Isaiah says, "There's

coming one, guys. We're laid bare. We have not been faithful to Yahweh. We have not held to what God has told us to be; a light to the world. But, there is Messiah coming. The story is not over. God will accomplish the redemption of the world still."

And how is this possible? It says, "Righteousness and faithfulness will be the very heart of this person's existence."

The imagery in verse 5 doesn't really come through. It's like, Messiah, His undergarments. His underclothing. Meaning, when you strip down everything, what do you find? You find Him wearing the undergarments of righteousness and faithfulness to God and the way that God has set up the world. You have this Messiah. And this is Jesus. This is the hope that we have; the hope of Christ. But, Jesus, though He rules with righteousness and justice and though He has the Spirit of counsel and might and knowledge of the Lord and though He judges rightly, it says in the second part of verse 4, "He will also strike the earth with the rod of his mouth."

Meaning, He will come in and tell us truth. Jesus is truth. He will come in and say, "This is truth and this is a lie."

He will come in and say, "You're wrong and you're right."

He will come in and say, "You've made this out to be something it was never made to be."

This is what Jesus comes to do. So, you see this. Probably the most angry Jesus ever gets is when He steps into His role as a prophet, and it's found in Luke 11. Let me read it to you. This is some of the angriest that Jesus ever gets. I know that we think of Jesus as meek and mild. Jesus is crazy. He's a little bit prophetic here. Look at what He says.

Luke 11:37: "When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal."

"You didn't religiously wash yourself, Jesus? You're so unclean."

"Then the Lord said to him, 'Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.'"

"Oh, you clean up really well. But, inside, you are full of wickedness."

"You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you."

Jesus was radically just and radically right in pushing Israel and His Church to act justly towards the poor.

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God."

"Oh, you look so good going to church every Sunday. You look so good tithing. But, you neglect justice and you don't really love God."

"You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."

"You should have still tithed, but you should have done it with a right heart, with right motives and cared for the poor."

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces."

"Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it."

That's an insult, by the way. This is my favorite verse. Oh my gosh.

"One of the experts in the law answer him, 'Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.'"

Jesus goes, "Woe to you, then."

He's like woeing everyone.

"And you experts in the law," – "you shouldn't have spoke up, because now it's coming at you" – "woe to you, because you load people down..."

I mean, who does that? He's like, "Jesus, you're offending me."

He's like, "You know what? Woe to you."

"because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry."

"All of these teachers, you give them so much stuff to carry."

"and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them."

"You're just giving them these heavy teachings and you're doing nothing yourself."

"Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the alter and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

"Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering."

Jesus, when He steps into His prophetic role, He is just as angry about people who turn the Church or turn following God into something it was never supposed to be. When you and I start to think that it's about religious activity, when you and I start to think about, "It's just about giving this part of my money and then I'm good, it's all about showing up to this event and then I'm good, it's only about this thing," Jesus has harsh words for His Church as well. They are words that are like, "There is hope if you repent. There is hope if you turn. Because, I want you to get about and be about my plan on what I'm doing in the world. Do you see what I'm doing in the world?"

This is what Jesus wants us to be about. Like, what Jesus is doing in the entire world. Not about our individual projects, not about necessarily our individual lives, but getting even wrapped up into the bigger picture of what God's doing in the world and in the nations.

So, this is where I'll end. You know, this last year as a church, we have brought on a director of our local ministry and global ministry initiatives. Our justice. Her name is Carrie Detrick. A lot of you guys know her. Yeah, she's amazing. So, our hope is this, and I shared this out our annual vision in prayer, and we're trying to drift this in to our church:

We want a culture of righteousness and justice in our church. Not just justicey things that we do, not just like, "Well, we give here and we do this thing once a month. So, we're good, right? Like, let's stand before Jesus and we're good." But, like a culture of it. Like, the way that we see our entire world is shaped around God's vision for the world. And I think it's going to take a lot of repentance on our part and take a lot of humility on our part to go, "God, maybe we're not really seeing it rightly. Maybe we thought we saw it rightly. Maybe we're so blinded by our own vision of our own worlds that we can't see the vision that You have for Your world."

And I think there's a lot of grace and that God will give us time to see it. But, we'd be foolish to think that God is going to allow us not to ever see it. Or it'd be foolish to think that God is going to say, "You know what? You've never saw it; your leaders never saw

it. You guys are good. Ignorance is bliss."

I don't think we're going to get away with that. I think that we have to spend time, as a church, repenting. And we have to spend time, as a church, to become awake to what God's doing in the world. And then I want to pray today that God gives us – and this is something that we've been praying about for a while – a global heart. Like, what does God want to do in the world through our church for the nations? Not just our city. We want to see God do stuff in our city. There's a lot of problems here. But, what does God want to do in our nation, our world, our entire world, globally?

God, give us a global burden. Give us a global heart. Is there some place in the world that You want to send us? Is there some place in the world that You're having us to partner with to take the wealth and the privilege that we have here and leverage it for this place? To take what we know and export what we know there. Our love for God and our living into tzedakah and mishpat. Is there a way that You want us to do this? But, God, start here. Start in our hearts. We repent. We want to see it the way You see it.

That's what we want to do. That's what we want to be about. So, would you let me pray and pray for our church and that as we move into this something would shift in our culture around this?

Let's pray.

Lord, all of us have a lot better things to do with our Sunday morning than to be religious and heap judgment upon ourselves. We don't want to be that, God. Keep us from that, God. Your mercy and Your grace is so good. But, it doesn't let us go. It doesn't let us off and continue to be self-absorbed; to be coddled and comforted in our own sin. I pray, by the power of Your Spirit now that You would give us as much as we can handle, corporately and individually, Your heart for what You want to do in this world and what You want to do through us in this world.

Thank You for the righteousness of Jesus, the justice of Jesus that makes us right before You and that brings us into fellowship with You, God. That's not the end, Lord. That is the motivation, that's the heart. Now that we're close, now that we're a part of Your family, we are a family that does righteousness and justice. That's our family. So, may that be true of us, God. The parts that we, individually and corporately, need to repent, we repent now.

We repent for turning a blind eye to injustice in our city and participating in it and paying for it, God. We repent for being so self-absorbed by trying to put, sometimes, just a roof over our heads that we forget what You're doing in this city and we forget what You're doing in people and our neighbors. We repent about making it so much about our individual faith and feeling good and walking with You, God, that we forgot about partnering with You to bring about Your reconciliation in this world and in this city.

So, we repent of that, God. And Jesus, call us back to You. I don't think You're calling us out. That You're not calling out the Church as much as You're calling us back, Lord. Back to faithfulness to You, back to working with our minds and our hearts and our hands and our feet to bring about Your vision for community and city and the world, Lord. And keep us with this holy discontent. Do not let us be satisfied by adding another thing. Do not let us be satisfied with the small victories that we have. Though we can celebrate them, God, give us holy discontent until we see the Lion lay down with the Lamb, until we see justice rolling down, until we see these things happen, make us discontent until we see heaven and earth become one. In Jesus' name, amen.