

God loves

John 3:16-21

“Poetic Justice”

When we get to see people experience bad (“just”) consequences for their risky or bad behavior

Especially when the punishment “fits” the crime

When are we upset that poetic justice doesn’t happen?

When people get away with doing the wrong we do, or wish we could do, or pride ourselves that we don’t do

When do we like poetic justice?

We people we don’t like or look down on receive justice

When don’t we like poetic justice?

When we are the ones receiving justice

What does “did not recognize Him” mean? *John 1:9-11*

We do not realize (or we choose not to realize) that Jesus is God

We do not treat Jesus as God, because we do not treat God as God

He has total authority over life and death and creation

But we think our ways are better

He is the only one who holds life in His hands

But we want to control life

He is the one who will judge the final judgment

But we think we can do a better job

What does “did not recognize Him” look like?

- Being too busy to see Him or listen to Him
- Never getting around to loving Him with head, heart, and hands
- Being more concerned about what other people think of me than what Jesus thinks of me
- Being more concerned about what I think of me than what Jesus thinks of me
- Treating Him as though He isn’t strong enough or powerful enough to protect me or do what I need
- Thinking He doesn’t love me enough, or that He can’t love me enough, to take care of me
- Looking to other powers or sources of help instead of looking to Him
- Insulting Him with faint praise (“He helps me get through life”) or insincere praise (“I bow down...”)

Justice

Each one of us so often fails to recognize Jesus as God

Each family and group so often fails to recognize Him as God

Humanity has so often failed to recognize Him as God

God came in the flesh, and we don’t recognize Him as God

What would poetic justice (and real justice) look like?

God rejects those who don’t recognize Jesus as God

This is both poetic justice and real justice!

And it must be because God is just

And yet...God says there is hope

Why? Where does it come from?

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,

that whoever believes in him shall not perish

but have eternal life.

the world

Those who do not recognize Him as God
Those who do not ~~have~~ make time for Him
Those who value other things or people more than Him
People we look down on / Us / Me

perish

The complete disaster of being separated from Light and Life (God)

God

The Creator
The Ruler
Whom we overlook & ignore

loved

Wants our good
And takes action to get it for us

so

His love is so great, and it is so real, that...

he gave his one and only Son

Incarnation: took on humanity!
Humiliation: mocked by the ones He came to save
Suffering and death

eternal life

The limitless joy of perfect love and life forever growing and expanding

believes

trusts / depends on / accepts His love

whoever

any sin or shame

**The Son of God did not come into a neutral world
to save some and condemn others**

**The Son of God came into a lost world
to save all who would trust Him**

**The Son of God did not come to find good people
who just needed a bit more help to be saved**

**The Son of God came to find and to save
guilty, shameful, and enslaved people**

The Big Idea

In Christmas

**we celebrate this incredible love of God
who gave His beloved and only Son
even to shame, suffering, and death
to rescue guilty, shameful, and enslaved people
and to give us unspeakable goodness and joy
forever
as we trust in this Son of God, our Savior**

Application

1) Receive this great love!

It is entirely a gift flowing from the limitless love of God

We receive it by believing in Jesus, the Son of God

Recognize Jesus as God

Head: believe the truth that Jesus is the only Son of God, and He is the only way to genuine and lasting life

Heart: bow before Him as God alone

Hands: accept His commands as our standard for life

Recognize Jesus as our Savior

He rescues and saves guilty, shameful, enslaved people

To be loved children of God forever

Who grow into the glory of their heavenly Father

It is not “a clean slate” or a chance to try again

It is being adopted as a deeply loved child of God

Forever

Yet it is so easy to slip back into thinking God doesn't really love us, or can't really love us, unless we improve

God will never regret saving you

because His love never fades

and you aren't the reason He loved you in the first place!!!

Some of us believe in Jesus, and yet we are still trying to earn God's love

We want to think we can be good enough to deserve it

Impossible!!

Do we think so little of the love of God??

Receive God's love

entirely as a gift

for guilty, shameful, and enslaved people

who trust in Jesus as their Savior

2) Love one another with this great love!

1 John 4:7-12

Love others who don't deserve it with the love you got and don't deserve

- Bless those who curse you. Give to those who ask of you.
- Be patient and kind. Don't envy or boast or be proud.
- Don't dishonor others, or be self-seeking, or be easily angered, or keep track of others' wrongs.
- Don't rejoice in others' troubles or wrongs
- Rejoice in what is true and good, even when it comes to my 'enemies'
- Always protect others' good and honor
- Always believe that there is more good in people than I can see
- Always hope for what is good and always persevere

3) Make known this great love, by actions and words

Freely you have received. So freely give

This kind of love in action is unmistakable evidence of the presence of God

“How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” *Romans 10:14*

Tell people, and show people, what God is like, loving people in a way they could never deserve

Empowered by the Spirit of God who is love

Reflection Questions

1. If you have not yet received this gift of love from God for you, what is holding you back from new and ever-growing life in the love of God?
2. If you have received this gift of love from God, when and how did that take place?
3. In what ways are you tempted to slip back into trying to earn God's love?
4. Where is God calling you to love people with His love that they don't deserve?
5. Who in your life needs to know this incredible love of God for people who don't deserve it?