

Mercy and justice are two activities the church engages in as part of its mission as an instrument of the kingdom of God.

One important aspect of the church's kingdom mission is issues of mercy and social justice.

Most Christians agree that mercy and justice should play some role in the ministry of the church, but disagree about its proper relationship to evangelism. Some argue for the centrality of justice and mercy in mission, while others contend that this undermines the primacy of evangelism. The debate centers on the question of whether social action is a by-product of evangelism or whether it is an integral part of evangelism.

Each position agrees, however, that Christians should seek to reflect God's character, and that God calls his people to "act justly and to love mercy" (Micah 6:8).

Micah 6:8 (NASB)

"He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

John 20:21 (NASB)

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'"

Psalm 106:3 (NASB)

*"How blessed are those who keep justice,
Who practice righteousness at all times!"*

"Righteousness," on the other hand, connotes wholeness in human relationships within community, suggesting that the well-being of every member of the community is a priority. Taken together, these words illustrate the moral mandate that God sets for his people.

Genesis 1:26–27 (NASB)

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Genesis 1:28 (NASB)

“God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Genesis 18:19

God says Abraham was chosen to *“keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.”*

This is pre-Law. Justice is not a Mosaic add-on; it’s foundational to God’s people.

Amos 5:21–24

21 “I hate all your show and pretense— the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. 22 I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings. I won’t even notice all your choice peace offerings. 23 Away with your noisy hymns of praise! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24 Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living.

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Isaiah 1:16–17 NLT

16 Wash yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. 17 Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

Micah 6:6–8

6 What can we bring to the LORD? Should we bring him burnt offerings? Should we bow before God Most High with offerings of yearling calves? 7 Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins? 8 No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Jeremiah 22:1–5 NLT

This is what the LORD said to me: “Go over and speak directly to the king of Judah. Say to him, 2 ‘Listen to this message from the LORD, you king of Judah, sitting on David’s throne. Let your attendants and your people listen, too. 3 This is what the LORD says: Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Quit your evil deeds! Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans, and widows. Stop murdering the innocent! 4 If you obey me, there will always be a descendant of David sitting on the throne here in Jerusalem. The king will ride through the palace gates in chariots and on horses, with his parade of attendants and subjects. 5 But if you refuse to pay attention to this warning, I swear by my own name, says the LORD, that this palace will become a pile of rubble.’ ”

Jeremiah 13-17 NLT

13 And the LORD says, “What sorrow awaits Jehoiakim, who builds his palace with forced labor. He builds injustice into its walls, for he makes his neighbors work for nothing. He does not pay them for their labor. 14 He says, ‘I will build a magnificent palace with huge rooms and many windows. I will panel it throughout with fragrant cedar and paint it a lovely red.’ 15 But a beautiful cedar palace does not make a great king! Your father, Josiah, also had plenty to eat and drink. But he was just and right in all his dealings. That is why God blessed him. 16 He gave justice and help to the poor and needy, and everything went well for him. Isn’t that what it means to know me?” says the LORD. 17 “But you! You have eyes only for greed and dishonesty! You murder the innocent, oppress the poor, and reign ruthlessly.”

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Luke 4:18–19

18 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.”

Mark 11:15–18 NLT

15 When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, 16 and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace. 17 He said to them, “The Scriptures declare, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,’ but you have turned it into a den of thieves.”

18 When the leading priests and teachers of religious law heard what Jesus had done, they began planning how to kill him. But they were afraid of him because the people were so amazed at his teaching.

John 2:13-16 NLT

13 It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. 14 In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. 15 Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers’ coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. 16 Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, “Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!”

Acts 16:37

35 The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, “Let those men go!” 36 So the jailer told Paul, “The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace.”

37 But Paul replied, “They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!”

38 When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. 39 So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. 40 When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town.

Acts 25:10–11

8 Paul denied the charges. “I am not guilty of any crime against the Jewish laws or the Temple or the Roman government,” he said.

9 Then Festus, wanting to please the Jews, asked him, “Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?”

10 But Paul replied, “No! This is the official Roman court, so I ought to be tried right here. You know very well I am not guilty of harming the Jews. 11 If I have done something worthy of death, I don’t refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!”

12 Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, “Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!”

Ephesians 6:10-13 NLT

10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.