

Old Orchard Church

July 5, 2009 — 10:15 to 11:45 a.m.

*For the civil magistrate is God's
minister to do you good.
But if you do wrong, be afraid,
for he does not bear the sword for nothing.
He is God's minister, an agent of wrath
to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

—Romans 13:4—

Credits

Cover art: A United States coin, and coins from the Roman world, minted by various civil magistrates in the first century.

Back Cover Art: “*Christ the King*” Book cover of the four gospels. French, late 10th century.

*Celebrating Jesus Christ,
Lord of Ministering Magistrates*

The Lord reigns on high,
The Lord is worthy to be praised;
Righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne.
He who makes angelic spirits to serve him,
Raises up human magistrates to do his bidding.
For the sake of the world he raises them up:
To punish those doing evil,
And reward those doing good.

Bless the Lord for his kindness to the nations—
For governors and prime ministers,
For town councils and presidents,
For judges and lawmakers:
All are given for justice and to promote what is good,
That the peoples may flourish and the earth be refreshed.
All are called to be wise and fair;
All will answer one day in the Great Judgment;
All serve the citizens they govern;
All are subject to the crucified, risen, ruling, King Jesus.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Alleluia!

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: Daniel 6
New Testament Lessons: Romans 13:-1-7

Sermon

“Worship as a Submissive and a Subversive Activity”

Daniel 6

Ron Lutjens, senior pastor, preaching

We celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Believers and the Political Order

What has God called us, his redeemed people, to be and to do in this present age for His glory? Clearly He commands worship and evangelism; also He commands godly living. The Scriptures state succinctly the essence of godly living:

And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

Justice, mercy and faithfulness, Jesus told the hypocritical Pharisees and teachers, are the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23).

“To walk humbly with God” expresses the essence of our personal obligation; it is faithful action arising out of trust in a sovereign God. “To love mercy” captures the central virtue of interpersonal relationships; mercy is freely bestowed kindness. “To act justly” identifies God’s essential requirement for the Christian’s behavior in society.

Justice is what is owed human beings by divine right. Most fundamentally, justice involves moral discrimination between the righteous and the wicked, the guilty and the innocent, that each may be rendered his or her due.

“Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the LORD detests them both.” (Proverbs 17:15) **“Shall not the judge of all the earth do justice?”** asks Abraham in his bargain for Sodom (Gen. 18:23-35). The fact that God is Judge of all the earth introduces the idea of justice into the universe at its most fundamental level. Without this reality, the idea of a moral universe dissolves into chaos, and with it the possibility of a just society.

The reality of the world is such that human society must continually strive to preserve and protect the rights of the socially weak, specifically the poor, aliens, orphans, and widows. Scripture frequently records the divine mandate for protective justice:

**Cease to do evil, learn to do good;
Seek justice, rescue the oppressed,
Defend the orphan, plead for the widow.**
(Isaiah 1:17; see also James 1:27)

The Bible also confirms the obvious fact that executing justice will involve not only case by case decisions but also a structure of instituted laws. **“Woe to those who make unjust laws,...to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people....,”** the Lord says. (Isaiah 10:1-2)

Scripture clearly attests to the supreme Judge’s passion for justice in human affairs, leaving no question with regard to our own involvement. Public justice is the social form of love for our neighbor and therefore one of the ways we are obligated to practice our religion. It is no more optional for God’s redeemed people than worship and evangelism....

The founding documents of the United States of America reflect a common commitment to justice and afford Christians the opportunity to influence public affairs....Christians along with all citizens have a right and an obligation to work within the political structure to promote public justice.

—David Jones, Professor Emeritus, Covenant Seminary (1995)