

Sermon: Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13 “Justice and Worship”

A casual read in the book of Deuteronomy they may suggest that this is the most disjointed and random group of instructions ever compiled. He talks about circumcising your heart, and how there will be a particular place to worship, and what food Israel can eat and what they can't, and their duty to love the Lord, and warned about worshiping idols, and what to do with prophets and people who have dreams and visions, and what to do with people who secretly try to entice them to worship other Gods and what to do with those who overtly try to get them to worship other gods. We read about tithing and feast days and offerings and sacrifices and sabbatical years, and loans and servanthood and on and on and on.

Read like this, Deuteronomy could read a lot like a list of chores or a to do list - but in no particular order of importance or priority. And I think we often reference Deuteronomy this way. We know that somewhere in the bible God talks about one topic or another and so we look up a keyword in the glossary of our bibles or in our concordance, or an internet search and we see a passage in Deuteronomy listed among other passages that address said topic and we glance at one or two of them draw our conclusion on what the Bible has to say about this or that and we go on our merry way.

Even preaching Deuteronomy can feel like this. I take a group of verses this week and try to help us learn something about our God and how we might know him more in hopes that we might love him more causing us to serve him more faithfully. And next week I will do the same thing again and then again and there can be a very disjointed feeling from week to week.

In reading in Deuteronomy this week I was struck again by how unified and purposeful Moses is as he addresses the children of Israel. Every section comes back to exactly what Jesus said it does in Matthew 22:37-40. 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” This is exactly what we see in Deuteronomy- and entire treaties on how to love God and love others; how to be in right relationship with God and with others.

1. God is Just
 - a. What is justice?

- i. Justice in the broadest sense is the idea that people receive in accordance with their actions.
 - 1. Justice demands an underlying law
 - a. We see examples in nature where the underlying law establishes the result
 - i. - Newton's third law of states or every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction -
 - ii. The principle of sowing and reaping establishes that the crop harvest will correspond with the seed planted
- b. Justice and only Justice you shall follow (pursue) vs 20
 - i. Wait! I thought we were only supposed to follow God?
 - 1. After all the first commandment is "you shall have no other god before me" Deut 5:6
 - ii. Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and Justice are the foundation of your throne
 - 1. Metaphor that shows us that God's authority, his right to rule is based on his justice - it is established by his character
 - iii. Col 3:25 God is impartial in his judgment and he will repay evil actions
 - iv. Hebrews 6:10 God is not unjust but will repay loving deeds
 - v. Isaiah 61:8 For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
 - vi. Leviticus 19:15 You must not pervert justice; you must not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the rich; you are to judge your neighbor fairly.
 - vii. Deuteronomy 1:17 Show no partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be intimidated by anyone, for judgment belongs to God. And bring to me any case too difficult for you, and I will hear it."
 - viii. Deuteronomy 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, showing no partiality and accepting no bribe.
 - ix. So The pursuit of Justice is a pursuit of God himself
- 2. Justice must be executed vs. 16:21-17:13
 - a. Like love Justice and righteousness are character attributes of God that we understand and experience through his actions
 - i. Therefore if you and I are going to be just and righteous we must do justice and do righteousness.

1. Micah 6:8 tells us to “do justice(esv)”” act justly(NIV)” “do justly (KJV)”
- b. So justice is pursued or followed through action
 - i. Negative action or not doing something
 1. Don’t plant trees or erect poles (vs 21)
 2. No pillars (vs 22)
 3. Don’t sacrifice impure animals ((vs 17:1)
 - ii. Positive action - what we should do
 1. Investigate false worship (vs 4a)
 2. Conduct a fair trial (vs 4b)
 3. Get help (vs 9)
3. Justice executed produces fear (vs 13)
 - a. God has given us a gift in community
 - i. When we see justice enacted around us it should cause us to recognise the underlying Law and the lawgiver and we

Application:

1. Are you actively pursuing justice?
 - a. what bribe are you accepting - approval
 - b. what are you leveraging - realtionships
2. How are you pursuing Justice?
 - a. Do you hear about things around you and desire to enact justice within your sphere of influence
3. Who do you fear
 - a. God or man