

# *The Pastor's Pen*

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During the Thursday evening Bible studies, we have explored our theme for the year, *Understanding Justice through the Lens of Jesus*, which is the first year of our five-year vision, *To Become the Voice of Justice for the Black Church in America*.

In recent years, the Black church has been too complacent in dealing with the inequities in our society. Injustice is sin, pure and simple.

By embracing this vision, we are not minimizing other key components of our Christian faith. We will always believe the basic tenets of the faith. We would never back away from Virgin Birth, bodily resurrection, or substitutionary atonement, to name but a few. However, those pillars of our faith have deep relevancy in our understanding of God's work in the world. We said two weeks ago that the story of the Wedding at Cana in Galilee is an example that the coming of Christ was God's way of displaying that the incarnation was an expression of God sending the world new wine and new life. Theological justice promotes that the old ways of sinful hierarchies are ended. Whites have no right to enslave or deny another's personhood because of the color of their skin. Further, the new wine of God's justice liberates women from being forced to endure the bullying sexual assaults of men like Harvey Weinstein, frees Native Americans from unquestioned acceptance of the government's rights to steal their land, releases Hispanics from terroristic laws that threaten them with deportation, and releases people with disabilities of having society shame them for their physical or emotional limitations. When Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, turned water into wine, He provided an example of how God is moving creation to a much brighter, fairer and joyful life. The desperate straits and despicable impoverishment of the Jews at the hands of the Romans was coming to an end. Thanks to Jesus Christ there was new wine.

The realities of God's call for justice are often so close around us that we take them for granted. When the Apostle Paul risked his life to stand against the Judaizers who insisted circumcision must be a requirement of acceptance into the Christian Church, he was striking a blow for justice. Had Paul's enemies prevailed, women in Christianity would have been as enslaved as they were in traditional Judaism and as they still are in several of the world's dominant religions. Without the physical restriction of circumcision, Paul was able to say in Galatians 3:27-29, *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Too often we don't give him credit, but with this majestic statement, Paul struck a resounding blow for justice.