

SOCIAL JUSTICE

by Bill & Pirkko O'Clock, January 2015

In today's American culture, social justice is usually defined as follows: everyone deserves equal economic, political and societal rights and opportunities. At first glance this idea seems reasonable, but this secular mindset with its humanist approach has little or no regard for religious perspective. In other words, our culture is being influenced by the view that redistribution of wealth will provide effective social justice for the poor and needy, focusing on economics to win the "war on poverty." The Body of Christ must provide an alternative, biblical approach to social justice, addressing spiritual poverty, which is at the root of economic and societal neediness in people's lives. The answer to this spiritual poverty will not be found in a monetary plan or well-meaning government programs.

Spiritual poverty can be experienced by anyone and affects all of us. King David recognized his own spiritual poverty by confessing in Psalm 40:17, "I am poor and needy." So, being poor and needy does not apply only to those in a low socio-economic status. In Matthew 25:45 our Lord states, "...whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." For many, this Scripture does not bring the unseen preborn to mind; however, the Greek meaning of "least" is literally "smallest in size." Therefore, poor and needy people are not only those already born, since we are smallest in size while growing in the womb. In fact, biblical social justice and individual worth start first with each person receiving identity and purpose from God, even before conception, as declared in Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you...." Secular social justice rationalizes that some should die, be ignored or be considered less than human because they do not fit into a limited definition of personhood or concept of usefulness. Such concepts must be countered with a biblical understanding of social justice.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself confirmed our humanity and personhood by taking the human journey, becoming fully human and fully God, starting with His conception. The Church needs to declare that every human creation is precious in God's sight, deserving dignity, protection and respect; whether in the womb or in the twilight years. The Bible makes it clear that the poor and needy can range from those who have obtained great material wealth to beggars on the street, the forgotten elderly, the imprisoned, or the smallest people who happen to reside in the wombs of their mothers.

Though government has a role in dispensing social justice in attempting to combat economic poverty, it does not have the understanding, capacity or compassion to properly address spiritual poverty. This poverty, characterized by unhealthy lifestyle choices and broken relationships, is unfortunately aided by ungodly policies and laws enacted by our state and federal governments, which hinder the establishment of true social justice by our political leaders. Biblical principles and the Holy Spirit direct Christians to properly minister mercy, hope, love and unselfish care through the saving grace of Jesus Christ to those dealing with the consequences of sinful choices.

God calls us to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves ... defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9). In pursuing social justice, Christians are privileged to truly serve alongside Jesus by knowing Him and making Him known, which results in caring for all humanity, including His littlest ones, the preborn. If social justice is not addressed correctly, the sin of omission (the good we fail to do) can be overlooked, especially if we are deceived by the secular world's reliance upon mere economic or political schemes. Let us not omit our call to confront the spiritual poverty that takes away the God-given rights of life and liberty, especially for the preborn, in our support of social justice for all.

It is a poverty to decide that a child must die so that you may live as you wish. —Mother Teresa
Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. —James 4:17 (NIV)