

Dr. Nicolas Ellen

I. **Central Definitions of Racism**

- A. Racism can be defined as the belief that one people group is more valuable than another and the practice of distinguishing one people group as more important than another.¹
- B. “Fundamentally, racism has to do not merely with real or perceived differences between people groups but with the value and significance of these differences. It has to do with the presumption of superiority over other people groups and the conduct of personal and social life that manifest this presumption in personal, communal, and sociocultural ways. Racism has to do with beliefs, actions, and structures that centralize some by marginalizing others on the basis of supposed differences.”²
- C. Whereas the word racism is not in the Bible, the concept can be understood as a practice of unbiblical partiality (i.e. ungodly bias towards people groups that results in elevating one people group and demeaning another people group; **a respect of persons not sanctioned by God.**)

Key Point of Sermon:

True justice is seeking to promote, influence or develop conformity to God’s moral standards, living rightly with God and others, and righting wrongs in accordance with God’s moral standards by the power of God and for the glory of God.³ Therefore, the answer to racism is not social justice but love and biblical justice.

¹ John Piper, *Bloodlines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 239. Kindle Edition.

² Douglas R. Sharp, *No Partiality: The Idolatry of Race and the New Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 52.

³ Scott David Allen, *Why Social Justice is Not Biblical Justice* (American Credo House Publishers, 2020), Location 89 of 423. Kindle Edition.

II. True justice according to Scripture will seek to challenge conditions that keep people from functioning according to their God-given design, as well as seek to create conditions that will allow people to flourish according to their God-given design. The ultimate agenda in challenging and creating conditions for flourishing is the salvation and sanctification of individual souls. Here are few things we can offer people in the name of justice to the glory of God (Jeremiah 22:3, Amos 5:24):

- A. Moral Capital – providing insights that will lead people into salvation and sanctification
- B. Social Capital – providing and developing families, friends, communities, voluntary organizations and community services that help people function according to what is God-honoring, pursuing their salvation or sanctification
- C. Material Capital – providing goods and services that will help people function according to what is God-honoring, pursuing their salvation or sanctification
- D. Economic Capital – providing or guiding people into training and opportunities to provide jobs, create businesses, create wealth, have property, land, copyrights, etc. that can help people function according to what is God-honoring, pursuing their salvation or sanctification
- E. Legal Capital – guiding people to gain legal advice and assistance to deal with legal matters to help people function according to what is God-honoring, pursuing their salvation or sanctification

(Gleaned from *Rethinking Social Justice* by Darrow L. Miller, pp. 130-131)

III. Three Levels of Justice (Psalm 106:3, Proverbs 21:3, Micah 6:8)

- A. Level #1: **Justice In and through the Law (minimalist stance of justice)** – People are doing the right thing because it is the law to do so; they are not going above and beyond their legal obligation. Justice is secured through the legal system at this level.
- B. Level #2: **Justice Above the Law (maximalist stance of justice)** – People are responding to a real need, threat, or deprivation of someone’s true rights/liberties whereby they are not required by law to do so. Actions come from a moral obligation, a conscience or calling of God. These actions seek to satisfy or restore actual injury to someone’s rights (i.e. the Good Samaritan). They go above and beyond their legal obligation or duty. They are not required by law to act, but they are convicted by love and conscience to act. Justice is promoted and provided through people responding to a real need, threat, or deprivation of someone’s true rights/liberties where they are not required by law to do so.
- C. Level #3: **Love Above the Law (maximalist stance of justice)** – There are no real needs, threats, or deprivation of someone’s rights/liberties. The person is seeking to show affection, be kind towards, or serve others without being asked or looking for anything in return. They are not required by law to act but are seeking to function in love,

demonstrating the morality of Jesus Christ to others. Justice is promoted and provided by investing in others to flourish as God designed according to His natural order of people and creation where there is no deprivation or threat or where they are not required to do so.

(Coming from the book *Improving Justice on Earth* by Patrick M. Talbot, pp. 18-21)

IV. When we choose to operate at a level of justice above the requirements of the law, we will promote, create or pursue (Isaiah 56:1):

- A. Opportunities to guide people into self-understanding of who they are and who they are not and what that means for their existence to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.
- B. Opportunities to guide people into taking personal responsibility, embracing what they can and cannot control to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.
- C. Opportunities to guide people into a disciplined, ordered life versus a lazy, disordered life to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.
- D. Opportunities to guide people into the moral order of relationships, treating others the way they want to be treated, and handling people over them, equal to them, and under them according to God's order to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.
- E. Opportunities to guide people into valuing God's order and purpose for marriage to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.
- F. Opportunities to guide people into valuing God's order and purpose for raising children to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.
- G. Opportunities to guide people into understanding and embracing the reality of the reaping and sowing principles— the cost, consequences, compensations of embracing and disregarding the morality of existence/the Kingdom of God existence in order to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.
- H. Opportunities to challenge laws that hinder flourishing according to God's order of creation or to promote laws that promote flourishing according to God's order of creation to pursue the salvation or sanctification of people.

V. Overall Big Picture:

Justice from a biblical perspective is seeking to promote, influence or develop people or institutions by the power of God and for the glory God in:

- 1) conformity to God's moral standards
- 2) living rightly with God and others according to God's moral standards
- 3) righting wrongs in accordance to God's moral standards
- 4) ultimately challenging people and institutions that hinder human flourishing according to God's moral standards and supporting people and institutions as well as creating institutions that promote human flourishing according to the moral standards of God

This is all done in order to guide people into salvation in Jesus Christ, sanctification into the image of Jesus Christ and service for Jesus Christ. We must consider these questions when seeking to promote and provide biblical justice (Proverbs 2:2, 3:13, 28:5):

- A. What has gone wrong?
- B. What was the cause of this problem?
- C. Who was the cause of this problem?
- D. Is this the natural order of consequences for something that should not exist?
- E. Is this the natural order of consequences for something that is functioning outside of God's designed order for its existence?
- F. What is the solution to fix this problem?
- G. What resources are needed to fix this problem?
- H. Who is needed to fix the problem?
- I. Who is responsible for which areas to fix the problem?
- J. Is this problem requiring divine intervention?
- K. Is this a problem requiring God-given human responsibility to do what they are responsible for and designed to do?
- L. How is God glorified in the resolution of this problem?
- M. How can mankind consider embracing salvation or sanctification through discussion and resolution of this problem?
- N. How are institutions moved to function according to their God-given order through discussion and resolution of this problem?

Summary:

"Sometimes we must wrestle with how to balance truth and compassion, maintaining a hand stretched out in invitation. How do we achieve that balance without abandoning truth? This balance is necessary because mission is an ultimate goal in engagement; because to embrace the gospel with its enabling power is the ultimate answer to all human need. Our solutions have to acknowledge and address the limits of what a person can do without the Spirit of God. This is where our politics, nationalism, racial identity, or ideology might get in the way of being missional. All these human answers have limits. If we're unaware of these tensions, we could mistakenly claim that more is possible in these spheres of public engagement than is realistic. To expect significant life or societal change apart from what the gospel supplies is asking too much of our efforts in these spheres, however well intended."⁴

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Cultural Intelligence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 107. Kindle Edition.