



“Justice Brings Joy”

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[2 Samuel 7:8–14]

I. Introduction

There is a proverb that says justice brings joy. It's Proverbs 21:15 and it says, *“when justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous.”* We all feel relief when the police catch and convict someone who has done something wrong. Jo and I have been watching a television show on how the police are driven to investigate serious crimes in order to find the truth. The show makes you feel comforted. It makes you feel like justice rules over society and that sense of security can make us feel some joy.

This is especially true when justice isn't maintained. When someone in authority makes an unjust ruling, it can frustrate and anger us. In Proverbs 29:2, it says that a *“wicked ruling...(makes) the people groan!”* When I was about 15 years old, I used to take a school bus to school. Our bus driver was a good guy whose nickname was “Sarge” because he once served in the military.

I was about 150cm tall and because I was very short, I often got picked on. On the bus, a couple of students were misbehaving and “Sarge” was trying to drive and to peer in his rearview mirror to see what the commotion was about. The commotion caused by the students was enough to eventually cause “Sarge” to pull over and find out what was happening.

The two students who were causing the problem shouted out that I was the one who started the commotion. “Sarge” turned to look at me with a big frown on his face. I blurted out that I didn't do anything wrong, but I was so afraid of being blamed that I must have looked guilty! “Sarge” eventually did blame me and I sat in my seat completely let down. I'm sure, as described by the proverb, I must have even groaned!

God's word is true! There is joy when justice is upheld. And this truth is magnified when we become adults. No longer are we just focused on the rule of our parents and those who care for us, but we assess the rule of our government leaders. We see how important justice is in ruling a country. When a government condones wickedness and foolishness we rightfully groan.

At University I was in a leadership development class, and I was asked in a debate to support pro-life, and a young woman was to support pro-choice. It seemed unfair from the very beginning! As we explained both of our opinions, I couldn't contain my frustration at the unwillingness of the young woman to engage with the injustice of abortion. You could argue, “At conception a human life is formed. The DNA proves this. All that is required after conception is food and shelter.” The counterargument? Choice is more important!

How much more do we groan for justice when we grow older! Today, we will look at the joy that God gives the world through His righteous reign. We'll look at how He provided joy to Israel through David and how that joy will be perfected when Jesus returns to reign with justice forever.

II. Context

Before we unpack today's passage, let's see what took place just before God speaks to David in our passage and blesses him.

Previously God anointed Saul to reign as Israel's first king. But soon after Saul began his reign, he struggled to follow God's Spirit into justice and righteousness. In one account, Saul is struggling to follow God in punishing the armies of Philistines. While he seems to be cautious in following God, his son, Jonathan, goes out to the Philistine armies with just his armour-bearer. Saul was with 600 men and Jonathan was just with one armour-bearer! Jonathan follows the Lord into battle and the God quickly delivers the Philistines over to defeat at the hands of Israel through the leadership of Jonathan. God had said that it was "just" to punish the armies of the Philistines and Jonathan was eager to see that justice come about.

While Jonathan was glorifying God's justice by punishing the armies of the Philistines, Saul was making unwise oaths that no one in Israel was to seek nourishment, food until Saul was satisfied with the destruction of the Philistine army. In fact, Saul said anyone who did eat would be cursed and put to death! This was not a requirement of God's justice! This turned out to be an unwise ruling. The Israelites became starving and soon began slaughtering animals and eating them with the blood of the animals. This went against God's laws. Saul's own son, Jonathan, also ate some honeycomb not knowing that his father had made such an onerous oath.

The armies of Israel are groaning under the reign of Saul and his unwise decisions. Saul can sense that he is not following God's justice because God no longer answers his requests. When he inquires why this has happened, that God is no longer guiding him, Jonathan, who ate the honeycomb, is blamed. Saul unjustly decides to kill his son and the people begin to groan again!

With the defeat of Israel's enemies through Jonathan's leadership, Israel felt great joy. Saul's own men come to defend Jonathan. They say, "Shall Jonathan die who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." Saul's own men preserve joy by saving the life of Jonathan who glorified God's justice.

Eventually, Saul continues to disobey what is just and soon God anoints a new king, who is David. Like Jonathan, David is zealous for God's justice and with that zeal for justice comes joy. After David defeats the Philistines himself through his confrontation of Goliath, it is said that the women from the surrounding cities came out, "singing and dancing...with tambourines, with songs of **joy**, and with musical instruments" (1 Samuel 8:6). There is a real connection between justice and joy.

III. Unpack

Because joy is so important to God, He establishes His justice. In our account today, we will see that He...

1.) Provides Justice

2.) Preserves Justice

3.) Plans a Perfected Justice

1.) God Provides Justice

In 2 Samuel 7:8–9, we see that God desires to share his just reign with His children that they would share in God's great work to bring joy to the world. And we see in this passage that God shares this amazing just rule with no distinction between economic or social status. God takes David from the fields where he was a shepherd and makes him a prince over a nation. Even more, God makes David's name gloriously great, "like the great ones of the earth." God does make one distinction, He desires a person whose heart is set on justice.

When David hears Goliath the Philistine openly defying God's justice through the armies of Israel, David is enraged. He doesn't see a 9-foot giant intimidating the armies of Israel. He sees opposition to God's reign and because of that, oppression and enslavement for his people. The Philistines hope to make Israel their miserable slaves. David's reply is to see God establish His justice and His ruling over the Philistines. David shouts to the giant, "...I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand...that the earth may know that there is a God in Israel...For the battle is the LORD's..."

God provides justice by His Spirit through a lowly shepherd. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "...the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." God desires to bring joy to the earth through His children who advocate for His justice. God took a shepherd like David, empowered him through His Spirit and made his name great to establish His rule, His justice in order to bring His joy to the world.

2.) God Preserves Justice

In 2 Samuel 7:10–11, now we see God preserve or firmly establish joy through justice. God secures a place for Israel and protects them from their enemies. No one will be able to afflict them with violence as had happened under Saul's unjust reign. God will establish a small community of judges who will advocate for God's justice. God's justice through David will now be multiplied through a greater number of Israelites who have a heart for God. Justice, as a result will be better established. Greater joy will be experienced in Israel as the enemies of God's justice will be removed.

We may remember Moses, who lamented on how difficult it was to lead Israel out of Egypt. Remember how some of the wicked in Israel were not satisfied with God's rule. They complained, "Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt...the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at!"

Moses found leading these people with God's direction to be too much of a burden to bear by himself. Moses complained to God, "Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favour in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me?...I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me" (Numbers 11). God replies by having Moses gather 70 men of the elders of the people to lighten the load for Moses. These elders will help to preserve God's rule, His justice for Israel. No longer will Moses groan under the weight of wickedness, Moses will again feel joy that God's justice will prevail.

The 70 are filled with God's Spirit and when others ask how Moses feels now that others will share in his work, Moses says, "Would that all the LORD's people were (like the 70), that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" That response sounds like joy!

3.) God Plans a Perfected Justice

In 2 Samuel 7:12-14, God doesn't just provide and preserve justice, He also promises to perfect it. God's perfecting of His justice in the future is a promise to bring great joy to the earth. God says to David that when David passes from the earth, one of his offspring will continue to advocate for God's rule and justice. God then promises David that there will come a day when one from David's offspring will have a perfected and eternal kingdom. This kingdom will advocate for God's rule without end.

This is significant, because Israel will see after David passes, a long line of rulers who don't advocate for God's laws and justice. They will experience great tragedies. There will be just a few rulers who advocate for God's justice and bring back God's joy to the people. But God said there will be one offspring who will establish God's justice perfectly and when that happens the whole earth will joyfully shout out God's praises.

In Jesus' time, Israel was under the oppression of the Roman empire. They were captive and in need of deliverance. Some at the time thought that Jesus was the promised offspring of David that would finally establish God's perfected rule over the earth. When Jesus entered Jerusalem it is described that many "spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." And they shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" The people were filled with joy because they thought God's kingdom, His justice would prevail. They were right! This was the offspring of David that will establish the eternal reign of God. But they, like us, must be patient because God does not want "anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). But there will come a time when these joyful words will be heard from heaven, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign" (Revelation 11:17).

IV. Application

What is our application for today?

Knowing joy isn't just doing something for someone to make them happy. Joy comes when we rest under God's Words, His Rule. Joy comes when we are rescued from enslavement to sin and we rest in the goodness of God.

I was speaking not too long ago with a New Zealander who originally had lived in the Middle East. We were talking about the challenges of life in lockdown and adjusting to the government regulations. They looked at me in surprise and said, "This is easy! You should try living under Saddam Hussein!" For this person who had lived under a far more unjust ruler, life in New Zealand was joyful! That's not to say that our rulers in New Zealand always uphold God's justice either, but we should be more joyful than many others in the world.

God's perfected and just reign will come one day. And when it does there will be great joy. That joy was proclaimed by an angel to shepherds when Jesus was born. They said, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). But this Saviour King will one day establish God's perfect justice so that the world would rejoice. That's good news for those who have peace with God through Jesus. For those who have peace and are united with God through Jesus, we can rejoice knowing that there will be a day when God will "wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore" (Revelation 21:4).

God has set aside His church, us, to provide, preserve and point to a perfected kingdom that is coming. God desires to fill us with His Spirit that we would advocate for His justice so that others would know profound joy. The Spirit is directing much more than just one of us to advocate for justice. He is mobilizing each of us. We are a priesthood of advocates for God's rule over creation. Our motivation is to know God's love for us and the world. His love which desires that all would experience rest and joy. Let us be a community, where each of us allow the Spirit of God in us to advocate for His Kingdom and let us point to Jesus, the offspring of David that was born that all would be able to enter that perfected Kingdom, that all would experience great joy.