

Sermon Title: **“The Missing Foundation”**

### **Introduction**

Good afternoon church. My name is John-Michael Becker. I am one of the deacons of the church and I serve full time in the orphanage ministry. It is my privilege to preach the word of God this Sunday. This is a message that has been stirring in my heart quite a bit over the past few weeks. Our sister Erin referenced to some of it during the Kingdom First prayer meeting last Saturday and our brother John Neufeld gave an excellent message during last Friday’s prayer meeting that included some of what has been stirring in me. I highly recommend listening to the podcast of his message.

Before we proceed with today’s word, I would like to say a prayer...

### **Pray (release revelation Lord!)**

### **Foundation of God’s Throne**

Pop quiz everyone... except for Brady and Pastor Marcus: what is the foundation of God’s throne?

During the call to worship we actually proclaimed them...

Psalm 97:2 – Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God’s throne.

Psalm 89:14 – Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God’s throne. This is the word I feel the Lord wants us to meditate upon today. Righteousness and justice.

### **The Church’s Current Foundation**

Scripture says that the foundation of God’s throne is righteousness and justice. But if we were to take an honest look at the universal church today, what would we say the church emphasizes? I see first and foremost, a church that emphasizes attending Sunday service and listening to the pastor. I think no matter the denomination or background of the church, that seems to be a universal value. Church attendance and the sermon. For some of the “healthier” churches, I see groups that emphasize tithing, praise and worship, reading the Word, and Bible studies. For even “healthier” churches, I see groups that emphasize discipleship, accountability, prayer, and missions.

Now let me list again what the church in general tends to emphasize: Church attendance, sermon, tithing, praise and worship, reading the Word, Bible studies, discipleship, accountability, prayer, and missions. Aside from missions, what do all of these things have in common? They are all **“righteous”** acts. They are all about making us into better people.

A very simple definition of righteousness would be, “To be right with God.” The church tends to emphasize that if we do all of these things... pray, read the Word, attend church, even have accountability and meet with one another... that by our faithfulness we are “right”

with God. We are doing well. And I want to say that all of the things I just mentioned are wonderful things. You all better be attending church, tithing, praying, and reading your Bible. Each of these things help understand more of who God is and who He is calling us to be. But I also want to add... **there is a danger in allowing only those things to be emphasized.**

There is a certain group of people in the Bible that set all of those righteous acts in high regard. Their lives were set to be as perfectly faithful to all the above acts as possible. They were called Pharisees.

### **No Justice = Pharisee**

The word Pharisee can be translated as, “Set apart” or “Separated one.” The Pharisees were Jews who strictly followed parts of the Law. Most of them had most of the Old Testament memorized. Memorized! These men were faithful to the church. They prayed. They tithed. They even fasted twice a week. Twice a week! These men did all the things the present day church emphasizes, and they did them religiously. Matthew 23:15 states that the Pharisees would even travel across land and sea to convert someone. Many of these men in the New Testament held to the belief that if they observed the “righteous” acts, they would be considered righteous before God. That God would be pleased with them. And the people of their day held such men in high honor. In fact, many of the people were intimidated by these “righteous” men and felt inferior to them.

But despite doing all these righteous acts that today the church still emphasizes, the Pharisees were Jesus’ greatest enemy during His time of ministry. Jesus never minced words when it came to criticism against these “righteous” men. In fact, He attacked their righteousness.

**Matthew 23:23 – Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.**

The Pharisees were so careful in carrying out their “righteous” acts that they would even tithe from the little bits of mint and tiny plants in their gardens. But they were missing the big picture. **They were so worried about their own righteousness that they were ignoring the world falling apart around them.** Their foundation was off. Way off.

### **Crooked Church**

Imagine I am holding a chair right now. It has four legs. Righteousness and justice represent these four legs, they are the foundation to this chair. Now let me remove justice. Let me break off two of the legs. Now what do I have? I have a crooked, unstable chair that can’t hold any weight. Without justice, the throne is unable to support the glory of God. For too long the church has been clinging to both God’s grace and to carrying out the so called “acts of righteousness.” We have become so wrapped up on the critical need to read our Bibles, pray, and attend church that we have missed half of the foundation of God’s throne. **And so we have not been able to experience God’s glory fully resting on us.** The emphasis upon righteousness over justice has become so strong that many churches are in danger of crumbling down.

### **The Good Samaritan**

Perhaps Jesus’ clearest illustration of the divide between the “acts of righteousness” and the need for justice is in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). I believe most of you know this story. It is the story of a traveler who is attacked by robbers, beaten, and left for

dead. A priest happens upon the beaten man, but rather than helping he passes by on the other side. A Levite, who is a teacher of the Law, also happens upon the beaten man. He too passes by on the other side. Finally, a Samaritan happens upon the beaten man. The Samaritan binds up his wounds, carries him on his animal to a local inn, and gives more than enough for the man to be well taken care of.

I remember reading this passage so many times and being so angry at the priest and the Levite. How could they be so cold and unloving!? What were they thinking!?

I'll tell you what they were likely thinking. According to the law of the Old Testament, if you were to touch the blood of someone you would be defiled and deemed "unclean" until evening. Blood represented a person's life stream and was not to be treated lightly.

Likely when the priest saw the beaten man, he knew that if he were touch the man then he would become unclean. That would mean the priest would not be allowed to enter God's temple that day. He would not be able to minister as he had planned. Likely the priest viewed his original responsibility as more important to God, so he passed by the beaten man.

Likely when the Levite saw the beaten man he too knew the consequences of becoming unclean. The Levite would not be able to teach as he had planned. He likely thought that it would be too great to sacrifice his time for this one nearly dead man and that he should just keep focused on those he had been discipling.

The priest and the Levite were so wrapped up in their own righteous acts, in their own busy schedules, that they completely ignored this broken man. **They didn't realize that God's heart was breaking for this man.** They didn't realize that while God honors their ministry, their Bible studies, and their desire to be clean before God, that more than anything God wanted them to love the hurting and exercise justice.

We don't read of either of these men being upset. They were blinded by their own busy schedules. They were focused on themselves. They likely never noticed the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the homeless, the widow, or the orphan. They may have heard about suffering in other lands but gave it little thought. In other words, for the sake of their ministry and their own time, they tolerated injustice all around them. Yes, they worshipped, they prayed, they read their Bible, and they fasted, they did those so-called righteous acts... **but they tolerated injustice.**

I believe the word that God has for His church in this hour is that if we desire the full weight of His glory, we can no longer tolerate injustice around us. A wonderful quote I once heard in reference to worship and justice is this, **"You can't talk about worship -- and sing to this awesome God -- if your life doesn't show there is a loving awesome God.** So a church without bringing justice to the community isn't worth being called a church."

So what do we do? How do we stop tolerating injustice and make a change around us?

Do we throw together a homeless outreach? Do we gather to pray and fast on behalf of the oppressed? Do we plan consistent hospital visits to pray for the sick? Wow, these things would be great! And I believe they will begin to come. But I sincerely believe that God isn't looking first for acts. He doesn't want us to try and go through the motions of working

justice just for the sake of obedience. **What He wants first and foremost is our heart.** I'm going to share with you all three keys to effectively fighting injustice.

### **Having God's Heart**

**The first key to fighting injustice is having God's heart for the victims of injustice.**

When we see or hear of injustice, He isn't looking just at our outward reaction, He is looking at our hearts. He wants us to ask Him for His love for the victims of injustice.

Mother Teresa once said, "It is not the magnitude of our actions but the amount of love that is put into them that matters."

When I moved into my orphanage here in Seoul at the end of 2005, I knew no Korean and didn't know any of the 80 children at all. I was ready to do my best to love the kids and be God's hands and feet to them, but I knew the only love I could give them would be the love I would receive from God for them. I served the children as best as I could. I tried to smile every time I saw them and encourage them in any way possible. And I continued to pray for God's heart for the kids. Then, a few months after being here, I was asked to give a special sharing to the church about how God led me to Korea and God's heart for the children. I remember it was that Sunday morning, as I was praying and asking God what I should share, that God first revealed His heart of love specifically for the children to me. Revelation of His love for them swept over me. And I broke. For the first time, I wept for my kids. I wept and I wept.

You see, I already knew a lot of their stories. I already knew of their struggles. But I hadn't experienced God's heart for them yet. There was now something new inside me. There was a stronger love and a stronger desire to pray. No longer could I tolerate the scars the children were continually carrying. I had to pray for them. I had to claim God's covering over them. I had to rebuke the enemy and his advances against them. As I experienced God's love for the kids I also experienced His desire for them to receive justice and freedom from their oppressors. My prayers began to change from simply interceding for the children into claiming God's promises for them.

It's as we receive His heart for the broken and for the needy that fire will begin to burn in our heart. **Our prayers will change from simple intercession out of obligation into passionate warfare out love and justice.**

### **Spiritual Battle**

**Here is the next key to fighting injustice: knowing that it is first a spiritual battle, and then a physical battle.** Ephesians 6:12 makes it clear that our battle isn't against flesh and blood but against the demonic armies of Satan. Our battle against injustice isn't so much against the corrupt politician, the abusive father, or a prejudice society, but it is against the forces of Satan working through such people. If we want to see justice then we have to fight for it, and it begins in the spiritual realm.

Every Friday afternoon I meet with a small group of intercessors to pray for North Korea. There is so much injustice happening in North Korea that it hard not to get stirred up. Now and then God will reveal a glimpse of the spiritual realm to me and I can't help but fight and yell in prayer. I'll see the demons holding the nation under idolatry and evil and I will see their long, sharp teeth and their delight in what they are possessing. This is when I can relate to the psalmist in praying prayers of warfare like,

**Psalm 58:6 – O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!**

**Psalm 144:6 – Flash forth lightning and scatter them; send out your arrows and rout them!**

These prayers are not focused against physical people, but against the spiritual powers that are oppressing those we are praying for. **We need to ask God for revelation of the spiritual realm.** We need to ask God to open up our spiritual eyes to the true reality around us. We can serve the homeless and the sick as much as possible, but unless we make war against the spiritual strongholds over such people we will never see them fully walk in freedom.

### **Knowing God's Will**

**The next key to fighting injustice is knowing God's will is to bring justice to the earth.** God's Spirit of justice will NOT TOLERATE injustice. **Injustice is NOT GOD'S WILL.** God HATES injustice. Turn with me to Isaiah 42.

**Isaiah 42:1-4 – Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.**

God wants justice. We never have to pray for it. Its not a matter of us pleading and asking "God, *please* bring justice to the earth." God wants to bring it! God wants to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. God wants to be a father to the orphan and to deliver those under oppression. God has also given us the church His authority and His Spirit to do His will. Authority is meant to be exercised.

When we pray for the sick we need to know that it is not God's will for the person to be sick and suffering. Jesus never told a sick or demon oppressed person that He wouldn't heal them. Matthew 8:16 states that He, "healed all who were sick." We are never to pray, "God, please heal this person." To pray in that way is to say that God needs to be convinced or coerced to heal the person. God already desires to heal the person! In God's kingdom there are no sick! We are instead to speak healing into the person, to command it. Jesus never told His disciples to ask God to heal the sick or to ask God to cast out demons in prayer, rather He told His disciples for THEM to heal the sick and for THEM to cast out demons (Matthew 10:8). The disciples had received authority from Jesus, and so have we. We as a church must exercise the authority God has given us.

We can no longer tolerate injustice like the priest and the Levite. We are to no longer pray weak prayers pleading to God for Him to save or heal those dear to us. When we pray for family members and close ones who are still lost and do not know Christ, we aren't to plead God to save them, rather we are to war against the work of the enemy in their lives and claim God's promises for them.

Of those who are still lost and don't know God, 2Corinthians 4:4 says...

2Corinthians 4:4 – In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There is a Spirit of Justice that God desires to pour out upon the church. He wants us to know His heart for those oppressed by Satan. He wants us to begin our fight against the enemy first in the spiritual, and then also in the physical. And He wants us to not pray and plead for injustice, but rather to exercise the authority He has given us and establish justice for this world. **And it is as justice is set into the foundation of the church, along with the righteousness that is already holding up the church, that we will experience the weight of His glory falling upon us.** Amen.

### Pray

Pray for family (should start at home) and sickness... take authority in prayer!

Pray for NK

Altar call?

Micah 6:8 – He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.