



Working for justice

sermon outline

PPT “While women weep, as they do now, I’ll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now I’ll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I’ll fight; while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I’ll fight, I’ll fight to the very end!”

(William Booth, 1912)

PPT “Christians shouldn’t just be pulling people out of the river. We should be going upstream to find out who’s pushing them in. To be neutral in a situation of injustice is to have chosen sides already. It is to support the status quo.”

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa)

Jesus commanded us to “Love one another” (John 13:34). When we love one another, we recognise the struggles of others and we show love by transforming their situation.

We show the love of Jesus by speaking up for injustice in the world. Advocating for social justice is another way to show the love of Jesus. As Booth and Tutu highlight, it is not enough to just ease the suffering and pain – we are called to fight the unjust systems that cause the suffering and pain.

PPT Lord’s Prayer

Working for justice reflects both our focus on this world and hope for another. The working for justice is the Kingdom of God on Earth. When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we ask “Your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven”. What would this look like?

In Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21, we read of “a new Heaven and a new Earth” – that is, God’s kingdom. We read: “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says ... I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more” (Isaiah 65:13, 19).



PPT “Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred
will be considered accursed.
They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
or plant and others eat.
For as the days of a tree,
so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands”
(Isaiah 65:20–22).

This is the kingdom we are waiting, working and hoping for. This is the kingdom where babies will not die (v. 20), where cancer does not take those we love (v. 20), where houses are not destroyed by fire or flood (v. 21), where drought does not destroy the crops of hard-working farmers (v. 21), where workers are treated fairly (v. 22). The Scriptures are full of descriptions of this incredible kingdom that we are going to experience, if we will only keep our eyes on him.

We don't have the power to eliminate pain, hurt and death. But as God's people on Earth, we have been given the mandate to show people a snapshot of the kingdom to come. As Michael Frost puts it, “The purpose of our lives is to be like a trailer of an upcoming feature movie”. In the same way that a movie trailer gives a glimpse of what the film in its entirety will be like, we are to give a glimpse of what the world to come will be like. Our lives are to show a glimpse of God's kingdom. We are to ease the pain and hurt and to comfort in death in preparation for the coming of that kingdom.

The problem is that in a world that is often dark and damaging, it is easy to become discouraged. When working for justice and in serving others, the problems of those we serve can become all-encompassing and so heavy that we struggle to carry them. Sometimes, the world simply seems too dark to handle. How then do we respond?

Our only answer is to keep our eyes on the kingdom to come and on the ruler of that kingdom. In God alone do we find the hope of a world that is so different to the one in which we live. It is this hope to which we must hold when our efforts seem useless and our hearts are hurting. It is Christ's love that compels us – not the love of recognition from others. We do not serve others to look good or to further the brand of an



organisation – we serve others because that is what God called us to do, and it is the only reasonable response to the grace which we as individuals have been shown! Let us live like it!

Song 42 in the Salvation Army Songbook reads:

*This is my father's world,
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong
God is the ruler yet.*

In the words of our founder, Catherine Booth, “There is no improving the future without disturbing the present.” So, disturb the present. Stand up, speak out, advocate, show love and transform lives.

We work for justice because we believe that the God of the Bible loves justice and people flourish best in a world that is fair and equitable. If all people are of value, then we must act in ways which ensure justice and equality for all. This means addressing unjust social systems through advocating for justice with government, businesses and the wider community. This includes raising awareness of injustice and actively working alongside others for a more just world.

PPT Watch “I’ll Fight: 2020”

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37LPPbJxguY>

Here is a well-known story that shows how The Salvation Army has been working for justice from the very beginning of our roots.

In the early 1880s in the UK, the law said that a girl of 13 was legally competent to consent to her own seduction.

Florence Booth had gained an insight into the lives of girls working as prostitutes. Through this work, the practice of trafficking girls to be used for immoral purposes, both in Britain and overseas, came to the attention of W. T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

He was horrified and investigated the claims made by The Salvation Army. He published his findings under the title *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, and received much support. In August 1885, the Criminal Law Amendment Act became law, raising the age of consent from 13 to 16 years.



The Salvation Army has been working for justice from the very beginning of our roots. Today in Australia, we are working for people facing homelessness, addictions, financial stress, domestic violence and unemployment. If we are to care for people, create faith pathways and build healthy communities, we cannot ignore injustice in the world. Our God loves justice and hates injustice.

In 2020, The Salvation Army produced a report called A Pathway to Social Justice. We are encouraged to read it and take time to think and pray about how we can take steps to a more just society.

Many of the actions are less about making huge life changes, but more about attitude and being mindful. Within the homelessness space, the report urges people to show dignity and respect to people who find themselves homeless. If you pass someone who is experiencing homelessness, acknowledge them and say hello.

Within the family violence space, we are encouraged to believe anyone who reveals to us – either explicitly or through subtle hints – that they are experiencing family violence. Also, to be careful about how we speak about family violence and call out people and organisations that use language that minimises or seeks to excuse violence against women.

www.salvationarmy.org.au/subscribe/sites/auesalvos/files/Advocacy/Pathway_to_Social_Justice_Final_Accessible_Oct13.pdf

or find the report at salvationarmy.org.au/antipovertyweek

Ask a member of your community to share a story of how they have worked for justice in the world – at their workplace, in their neighbourhood or through the Salvos.

Share stories of how your community is working for justice. Encourage your people to pray and think about ways they can be involved in your Local Mission Plan.

Suggested songs

Theme: Working for justice

Songs that call to active response and speak of freedom

| Song | Artist/Author | Where to find it |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| <i>Marching On</i> | Rend Collective | https://songselect.ccli.com/ https://rendcollective.com/ |
| <i>Let Justice Roll</i> | TransMission | http://www.usmusicandarts.org/transmission |
| <i>I'll Fight</i> | Nathan Rowe | Contact Worship Arts |
| <i>God Of The Poor</i> | Graham Kendrick | SASB 998 |
| <i>Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)</i> | Chris Tomlin | https://songselect.ccli.com/ |
| <i>I'll Go In the Strength of the Lord</i> | Edward Turney | SASB 959 |
| <i>Way Maker</i> | Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu | https://songselect.ccli.com/ |





Working for justice

all age worship
discussion

(please draw on any other PPT slides and suggestions in the notes above)

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PPT “Our Father in Heaven,

hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on Earth as it is in Heaven”
(Matthew 6:9–10).

PPT Think

- What would it look like for God’s will to be done here on Earth – for his kingdom to come?
- What would it look like for people who experience injustice in this world?



Discuss

- What are some of the injustices you see in the world?
- What are some ways we can work together for a more just world?
- What are some of the challenges we face in working for justice?

PPT Pray

- Thank God that he loves justice and will put the world right.
- Ask God to help us work with him to address injustice in the world and in our community.

Act

- What is a social injustice that you would like to learn more about?
- What is our Working for Justice Local Mission Plan and how can I get involved?