
FREEDOM SUNDAY

Slavery - Over 40 million people are held in slavery today. 1 in 4 slaves is a child. (Walk Free Foundation and International Labour Organisation)

Human Trafficking

- + Human trafficking generates about \$150 billion a year—two-thirds from commercial sexual exploitation. (International Labour Organisation)
- + In 2016, a child went missing in India every 12 minutes. And 50% of missing children have not been found. (National Crime Records Bureau)
- + More than 9 out of every 10 (91.1%) Australian companies have identified potential modern slavery risks in their supply chains.

International Justice Mission - IJM

IJM is the largest international anti-slavery organisation in the world. They work where justice systems are unable to protect the oppressed from violence. This includes in 24 communities around the world.

Their vision is to rescue millions, protect half a billion, and make justice for the poor unstoppable. IJM has trained more than 115,000 justice system officials to recognise and respond to violence since 2012.

IJM has rescued more than 76,000 people rescued from oppression and are currently helping local justice systems protect more than 150 million people from violence around the world.

IJM has more than 4,600 convictions against slave owners, rapists and other criminals.

What God Requires

What does God really want from us in knowing what we now know?

This is the question a prophet in the Old Testament – Micah puts to his people.

Micah is sent by God with a message to God's people who had been violating their covenant with God.

I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin. Micah 3:8 (NIV)

Israel's leaders and prophets were corrupt and had gained wealth through theft and greed. These leaders have been bending justice to favour the wealthy and the poor are deprived of their land, their security, and their hope. All of this is directly going against God's law (Leviticus 25:23; Numbers 36:7)

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? Micah 6:8 (ESV)

They may have been tempted to think that God would be happy if they presented what appeared to be 'next level' sacrifices (Micah 6:6-7). The confronting situation Micah reveals, however, is that as long as the people tolerate and perpetuate injustice, their worship is an offence to God (Isaiah 1:10-17; Isaiah 59:9-11).

God's people in Micah's day thought acts of worship could coexist with lifestyles that were grossly unjust (Micah 5:6-7; 1 Kings 21:1-16).

When God's people neglect to live justly, even the very best communal worship – no matter how impressive, engaging, or reverent – is worthless.

Micah says the most concrete way to show true dedication to God is to express justice in the totality of life – this is what Micah's contemporaries were not doing (Micah 6:8).

Connecting justice to true worship should not surprise us: God has always insisted that justice should characterize His people (Exodus 22:21-24; Isaiah 58:6-12; Psalm 72)

Change is Possible – Walk on in Hope!

God's covenant love and promises are more powerful than evil and the hope we know is to walk faithfully in God's ways so all would experience His justice, love and mercy (Micah 7:18-20).

Scripture indicates that under Hezekiah's leadership God's people eventually listened and repented. Micah promises a coming ruler who will truly shepherd God's people. True justice and righteousness is won and enabled through Jesus (Luke 4:18-20; Matthew 6:33; Romans 1:17; 5:19; 6:18-19).

Because of Jesus, acting justly becomes a way of life for God's people. We are raised to this kind of new life (Romans 6:1-4). He lives in us to recreate us in His image (Ephesians 4:24, 2 Corinthians 5:17). This is the worship our God delights in (James 1:27).

What will it actually look like for our church to 'act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God'? Justice is possible, and we have a role to play. God is at work making His kingdom a reality here on earth.

IJM – Freedom Partner

Each one of us here can stand with IJM by becoming Freedom Partners today. Freedom Partners give \$35 or more to IJM each month. Freedom Partners are also regularly called upon to pray for urgent needs in the field, to advocate for lifesaving legislation and to attend special IJM events.

In short, IJM knows where people are enslaved and has a plan to rescue them. Because of Freedom Partners, IJM is seeing slaves set free and putting their slave masters behind bars.

Visit - <https://ijm.org.au/>

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss together the statistics around modern-day slavery. Perhaps bring the IJM website up and refresh yourself with some stories of slavery.
2. What does this knowledge do to you?
3. Read Exodus 22:21-24; Isaiah 58:6-12; Psalm 72. What does this say for how we view worship, and how we address injustice? Have we separated 'worship' from acting justly and loving mercy?
4. What can you do to reflect the heart of God for the poor who are treated unjustly? What will it actually look like for our church to 'act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God'?
5. If becoming a Freedom Partner is not within your financial resources, why not consider doing this as a group? For a group of 12 people that's only an annual commitment of \$35 each.