

ABC's of Wisdom – J for Justice
Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. – Amos 5:15

I crave justice. Not like chocolate, it's a more deep heart yearning that even a bite of pleasure won't satisfy. I yearn to live in a country where there is a justice system, not a complex legal system. The human heart recognizes justice. The court may not. Of course we need laws. I'm not for a minute suggesting that we don't need laws. It is just that we already have laws on the books and we still have the distorted attitudes of our fellow humans.

My husband and I like to watch some of the British who-done-it series. Recently there was a long unsolved cold case in which three people could have been considered guilty by the law. However, and this is a big however, each of them had spent the last thirty years contributing to society in a huge way. In addition to that the people they did away with thirty years earlier were each undeniably guilty of causing serious harm to children. Since there was not enough evidence to prosecute them nothing was done. It seems just.

Justice is sometimes served when the law just doesn't fit. Of course this is a very gray area. Still, we ought not take the law into our own hands even when we think we are justified. (Pun intended) That is what the masses do whenever they have endured injustices for long periods of time with no relief. It isn't pretty and lots of people are hurt. It is vengeful.

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice," as Sir Francis Bacon, said in 1625. In its wildness it is consumed and recreates worse than that which it avenges. Vengeance becomes the judge, not reason.

Biased attitudes on all sides create chaos. We cannot legislate attitude. It is taught by parents and grandparents to their young children. Children do follow their parents' examples. They remember best, however, what they learn experientially. They learn from their playmates on the playground and in the classroom. If you are white and your children do not have playmates of color, they will only learn by what they hear you say or how they see you interact with people who may not look like them.

Though children will follow their parent's lead I think the heart of the child knows when something is not just. One of my earliest memories was in the White House department store in downtown Beaumont when I was taken to the water fountain for a drink. I could read simple words and I knew what I read there was not fair. "White Only" on a sign above one of the fountains. That was probably sixty-seven years ago. A child's heart knew it was wrong. We may not have signs on water fountains but we carry prejudice in our hearts. It was wrong then and it is wrong now. It is not just. I dare say some Americans would like to keep us all separated into our racial groups. How pathetic. We should all be outraged.

It is past time for a society in which we live together in harmony. It is time for a change of heart.

Justice and the law do not always match. But human hearts know one another. Wherever you see justice you will recognize it as fair. Even children recognize fair until adults distort it. Pure justice is simple and an essential ingredient of wisdom.

"Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are." – Ben Franklin