

Social Justice, is it what Jesus taught?

By Dianne D. McDonnell

“Social Justice” is being widely advocated in the United States today. The way Social Justice is being presented to Americans is that government takes, by heavy taxation, money from those who have earned it, and the government gives it to those the government determines to be needy. In practice, the most successful wage earners are impacted with a much higher percentage of the cost of paying for this government mandated “justice”.

Lately it has been **widely voiced that this is what Jesus taught.** In making these statements these claimants step from politics directly into the realm of religion. So, let’s look carefully at the words of Jesus so you can see if these claims are accurate and backed by scriptural evidence.

In Matthew 6:1-4, we find what Jesus taught about giving to the needy:

“Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“So **when you give to the needy**, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that **your giving may be in secret.** Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Notice that Jesus is talking about **each person voluntarily giving as an individual** to those around him that he knows to be in need. Each person is to give in secret, quietly.

The Example of Esther

Some time ago I was at the funeral of one of the finest Christians I have ever known, a small but mighty black woman named Esther who was my dear friend. The large chapel was filled wall-to-wall mixture of blacks and whites all grieving this very dignified gray-haired lady. As a young woman her husband had divorced her for another woman, leaving her to provide for five small children. So she worked full time, raised her children, and yet was at church every week with a cheerful smile, listening and encouraging others.

During her funeral, person after person stood before us telling us how Esther had helped them. One detailed how Esther had secretly paid the way of another choir member that lacked the money to take a church trip. A tall muscular black man with tears in his eyes recalled how Esther had provided him with money to pay some bills when he was newly married and out of a job. He had to promise not to tell anyone. Many other men and women came forward praising her wise counsel

and open-handed generosity. As I listened I wondered how she had put aside enough money to help others while rearing five children by herself! It was a side of her I had not known about.

Esther's love and gentleness radiated around her in a warm circle of concern for everyone who came in contact with her. When she was about fifty-five she was waiting at a bus stop to go to work. A young man ran up and knocked her down so violently that she fell to the pavement and broke her hip. Then he grabbed her purse and her Bible and ran away. When she finally got out of the hospital I asked her how she was doing. Brushing aside her hospital stay and still painful hip, lost money, stolen identity cards and the loss of her cherished Bible, she replied, "Please pray for that young man! He is so young. I don't want him to be caught up in a life of crime! Please pray for him that God will save him from a life like that!"

All of her concern was for her attacker—there was not a single word about her own problems! What kind of a woman can sincerely express such a deep concern for someone who caused her such pain and expense? Esther lived true concern for others and embodied true Christianity. I will never forget her. I expect that the next time I see this fine lady she will be glowing with her own serene, radiant smile, and she will be standing with her own quiet dignity, clothed like royalty with a high place in God's Kingdom. Christians have the promise of Jesus that God does see and remember, "Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will **reward you.**"

What Jesus Really Taught

Notice that Jesus taught **each person is to give quietly**. He did not aim his words just at the wealthy, but at ALL of us! Jesus did not teach that the government is to collect a high percentage of the money earned by the most financially successful among us and then government is to distribute it. That robs each individual of his or her own reward for doing good to others. The government gets all the praise, and those paying the big sums of money do not get to see who is being helped with their hard earned dollars. As a direct result, the majority of people begin to feel that they do not need to help others at all since the government is doing it. After paying heavy taxes one is left with very little remaining money to contribute to others in need. Some who embrace the concept of "social justice" are beginning to think that helping the poor is only **the role of the wealthy and not the role of each Christian**. That is **NOT** the teaching of Jesus! The entire doctrine of "Social Justice" shifts compassion from the voluntary to the mandated, and from the individual to the collective state. Yes, Christians are to pay taxes, but no one should represent the "social justice" system as the teachings of Jesus!

Jesus taught individual compassion. Jesus taught that each person is to be sensitive to the needs of those one sees around him and to quietly, secretly, in loving concern, provide whatever help he or she can manage. "...Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."