

# Justice here & now



**The Bible offers many lessons on justice. Jesus, in his very life, shows us what Christian Justice looks like. Luke 15 (The Prodigal Son) is a great picture of two primary forms of justice and the very questions we face as a Christian community wrestling to “do justice.”**

The wayward brother has seriously messed up. He disrespected his family by asking for his inheritance early, then went out and squandered it. Out of desperation, he returned home, ready to beg for his father’s forgiveness. You can feel the tension between the older brother and the father as they respond in two very different ways—two “just” responses to one situation.

**Global Justice**  
Working side by side with global companions to seek justice.

The older brother is angry and wants accountability... **Retributive Justice:** Punishment justified on grounds that the wrongdoing committed by a criminal has created an imbalance in the social order that must be addressed by action.

**Domestic Justice**  
Ecumenical partnership to end poverty in our country.

On the other hand, the father comes running to welcome his lost son, even going so far as to throw him party, giving us a great illustration of...

**Local Justice**  
Community action by congregations to support their neighbor.

**Restorative Justice:** An intentional response that emphasizes healing the wounds of victims, offenders and communities to restore wholeness.

Jesus uses this parable to show us God’s loving forgiveness and response to brokenness as a model for what it means to love our neighbor as ourself (Matthew 22:39.)

This parable also helps us understand the tension between charity and justice. Both are needed yet it is only justice that heals and restores relationships to health. The younger brother returns home ready to beg “I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” (Luke 15:19) asking for his father’s charity. Yet the father brings him in as a full member of the family, showing us Christian justice.

**Charity:** Responding to the immediate needs of hurting people in our world. This is expressed through food pantries, homeless shelters, programs and service, etc.

**Justice:** Changing the systems to reduce suffering and removing barriers that keep people separated. This is expressed through advocacy, community organizing, cultural immersions and accompaniment, etc.

Both responses are important, yet only justice has the capacity to make lasting changes that reduce the need for charity. **Christian Justice welcomes and respects all people.**