

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Locked in Solidarity – 2024

Rev. Dr. Kevin Riggs and Rev. Kevin Burns

PREACHING / TEACHING GUIDE

THE BIG IDEA: The primary characteristic of God is holiness. Thus, God's love is a holy love. God's mercy is a holy mercy; and God's justice is a holy justice. Restorative justice, not punitive justice, is a holy justice.

(My approach to this sermon was to prepare it as if I would be preaching it. The manuscript was prepared like I do all my sermons, except it is a little longer than a normal sermon. I tried to add extra material so you could adjust it to your group and your setting. Please feel free to add and subtract and pick and choose what to use and what not to use. It is hoped this preaching/teaching guide will assist you in preparing to share with your community. The Scriptures listed below are in the order they appear in the manuscript.

NOTE #1: This sermon was a joint effort between myself (Kevin Riggs) and my good friend and fellow pastor, Rev. Kevin Burns. Rev. Burns is presently incarcerated on death row in Tennessee. A few years ago, my church (www.franklincommunitychurch.org) ordained him. He is now considered to be one of our church pastors. We also helped Rev. Burns start a church on Tennessee's death row. The name of the church is Church of Life and is the only church on death row anywhere in the country that was started by and led by a person on death row.

NOTE #2: My opening remarks serve as an introduction. The majority of this year's sermon is by Kevin Burns.

SCRIPTURES REFERENCED: (Scripture references are in the order they appear in sermon manuscript. Some verses are used more than once but are only listed when they first appear. Kevin Riggs used the New International Version. Kevin Burns used the King James Version.)

Genesis 11:1-9

2 Corinthians 5:19

Revelation 6:10

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Acts 2:4-6

Isaiah 46:9-10

Genesis 19:1-29

Genesis 1:31

Ezekiel 16:49-50 and 53-55

Genesis 3:14

John 8:1-11

Genesis 4:1-26

Genesis 3:15

Genesis 15:6

THE BASIC OUTLINE: For our purposes, the definition of restorative justice is as follows:

Restorative justice is a framework and process, rooted in indigenous teachings, that starts with the needs of people who have been harmed, brings the impacted community together; and facilitates true accountability — acknowledgment, repair, and change that ensures harm will not be repeated.

- 1) Introduction: A personal illustration. Please feel free to use your own illustration.
- 2) Restorative Justice.

- a) Punitive Justice: Punitive justice, by itself, is neither just nor biblical.
 - b) Restorative Justice defined and explained.
 - c) Restorative justice is both just and biblical.
 - d) Restorative justice is biblical because it is rooted in the character of God.
- 3) Sermon by Rev. Kevin Burns.
- a) Moses
 - b) Abraham
 - c) David
 - d) Nebuchadnezzar
 - e) Peter
 - f) Saul/Paul
 - g) Restorative justice is made perfect and complete in Jesus Christ.
- 4) Conclusion.
- a) Summary.
 - b) A prayer by Pastor Kevin Burns

Introduction:

- The sermon begins with a personal, childhood story.
- Ask your group what they think when they hear the terms punitive justice and restorative justice. Ask if anyone has a personal example of either one.

Restorative Justice:

- Punitive justice is compared to restorative justice. What are some ways in which they are the same and ways in which they are different.
- Another good discussion would be to talk about if people agree with the statement, “*Punitive justice is neither just nor biblical. Restorative justice is both just and biblical.*” Let people explain their answers without saying one is right and one is wrong.
- Another good discussion point would be the illustrations from Scripture that are given in this section.

Pastor Kevin Burns’ Sermon: Pastor Kevin Burns sermon centers on Isaiah 46:9-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. There are several points he makes that should lead to good discussions. Don’t rush through this part. Talk about all the biblical examples that are given.

Conclusion:

- In the conclusion there is a good summary of what Pastor Burns has said. It may be good to read this summary before reading the entire sermon.
- Pastor Burns concludes his sermon with a short personal example and then a prayer.
- Read the prayer together, out loud, with your group.

*Gracious and eternal God,
in the name of Jesus our Lord we thank You.
We thank You that You are just God perfect and righteous in all your ways.
I thank You, Lord God, that Your justice and Your mercy is extended unto us.*

I thank You, Lord God, that You redeemed me.

*You restored me back in righteousness.
You reconciled me back to Yourself
and have given me a clear mind a clear conscious.
A conscious that is without guilt.
A conscious that is clean, Lord God.
You have also given me a spirit that is clean.
You have renewed me and given me peace in my spirit,
in my mind in my body,
and have made peace between Yourself and me
Lord, I thank You.*

*And then, through Your grace found in Jesus,
You sought out opportunities, according to the Scripture,
To have mercy on all who will call upon Your name.
I just pray Lord, that we as a people will come to know You
and Your restorative justice.
That we will come to know You in righteousness.
That we will come to know You are the God of restoration.
You are a God that loves mercy and seeks mercy out.
You are a God that is waiting for Your people to call upon Your name.*

*Lord, I pray we come to know You as the just God You are.
Lord, we bless You, we honor You,
and we praise You for all of this and many other wonderful blessings.
In Christ Jesus we pray.
Amen and Amen.*

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Suggested Books
The New Jim Crow (Michelle Alexander)
Beyond Bars (Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards)
Rethinking Incarceration (Dominique DuBois Gilliard)
Executing Grace (Shane Claiborne)
- Rev. Kevin Burns loves to receive cards and letter. You can write him at, Rev. Kevin Burns (#234315), RMSI, Unit 2, 7475 Cockrill Bend Blvd. Nashville, TN 37209.
- Rev. Dr. Kevin Riggs can be reached at kevin@franklincommunitychurch.org, on Twitter @pastor4justice, on Instagram, pastor4justice, or at (615) 440-7553.