Motivation to Justice: Wesley's Soteriology and Congregational Mission
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The Perennial Challenge: Lack of Sustained Congregational Efforts Toward Justice

One of the challenges many churches face is that a small percentage of congregation members do the lion's share of the ministry. This point holds true especially for efforts falling under the category of justice. Whereas many Christians have a basic sense of the nature of the rain or kingdom of God as the central metaphor for guiding justice-seeking work, not many recognize the inherent link between personal spiritual thriving and justice. American individualism, with a "follow your dreams" culture, lessens awareness of the immense joy Christ's followers have in sharing in the anticipated, here-but-not-fully, *Shalom* of the New Creation. Justice-related activities are often seen as too difficult and not necessary for a person to experience a thriving spiritual life. We live with a continuing gap between loving God and loving neighbor.

We can add to this inertia the numerous disagreements about the meaning of the term justice. On the one hand, it demands a commitment to alter large-scale conditions and the structures perpetuating them. To do this work effectively requires people to be ethically and politically well-informed and active in the appropriate structure-changing efforts. This view of justice has become so dominant in western, so-called mainline churches that any ministries not explicitly committed to advocacy for social change do not qualify as justice ministries.

This way of thinking often lies behind the distinction many of us learned to make decades ago, between mercy and justice. Meeting immediate needs that temporarily ameliorate suffering (mercy) is good, of course, but this approach, for all the good it does, receives criticism for not working to correct unjust conditions. Those engaged in such ministries may pick up the sense that their efforts don't "count" somehow. It may leave them with the feeling of being caught

between a rock and a hard place. They know that meeting immediate and basic needs is expected, but it also seems to them like nothing ever gets better for people they're helping. It's difficult, with such thoughts, to sustain the energy to stay engaged.

While we recognize the value of modern theories analyzing structures and advocating for social change, the ancient concept of justice as giving each person their due still holds merit. It helps regular Christians at the local level gain confidence that contributing to justice is within their reach. The concept of justice as giving each person their due predates Christianity, but it is fair to say that scriptural faith applies the concept more justly than the originators of the concept did.[1] It resonates nicely with Wesleyan soteriology, which is familiar territory to people acquainted with John Wesley's theology, but it is less well-known to most congregants. While debates about what counts as justice continue, thinking of it as giving each person their due provides a helpful starting point for imagining how more congregants can do justice.

A second impediment that limits local congregants' sustained engagement in justice work is the notion that justice "is not my gift." Teaching about spiritual gifts has been helpful to many people, but, along with the individualism so characteristic of American society is a misunderstanding about what should be included in the specificity of spiritual gifts and what is more broadly expected of all Christians. It has been easy for people to leave justice ministries to those congregants considered as having "the gift." This opinion blunts the force of those scriptures reminding Christians that loving neighbor is a normative part of the Christian life for everyone. Understanding "neighbor" in the sense that Jesus taught in parables such as the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, with consideration, helps bring to light the need for every disciple to recognize justice as an integral part of discipleship.

[1] In a strictly stratified, hierarchical society such as democratic ancient Greece, giving a person their due maintained traditional social hierarchies. It meant that people of lower ranks, especially slaves, had next to nothing due them.

Central to the problem I seek to identify is a conceptual mistake with very practical ramifications. Sometimes, in efforts for justice, we focus so exclusively on pragmatic concerns (we all want to see positive change) that we don't see clearly enough how a person's understanding is endemic to experience. To state the point another way, thinking is part of our experience, therefore the conceptual contents of our thoughts color our emotions, the way thoughts feels.

How everyday Christians understand and feel about their experience with God motivates their actions in the Christian life. An example of how this conceptual understanding shapes emotional experience and contributes to action responses comes from American psychologist Justin Barrett. In a podcast called "For the Life of the World," by the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, Barrett tells of how he reacts emotionally to the smell of hazelnuts. He tells how his spouses is deathly allergic to them. The concept, "Hazelnuts are dangerous to my spouse" shapes how he feels when he smells them. The combination of thought and emotion lead to his avoidance of hazelnuts.[2] This simple example helps us to see the practical impact on behavior of what we understand to be compellingly and significantly true.[3]

The same line of thinking applies to what we believe to be theologically true. Here I want to make clear that I use the word "theologically" not in the conventional academic way, which construes of theology as our constructions of experience of God. I use "theology" in the more direct and robust sense of actual experience with God, the God described in Scripture. My thesis is that people who experience the love of God as described in Scripture and elucidated by John Wesley feel sustained motivation to work for justice (giving each person their due) because they feel the power of God's love working in them. A congregational ethos shaped by this experience

[2] https://for-the-life-of-the-world-yale-center-for-faith-culture.simplecast.com/episodes/bringing-psychology-to-theology-justin-barrett-miroslav-volf-hMj7llH0. Accessed May 10, 2023.
[3] Believing that something is trivially true does not have the same motivating force.

to engage in justice ministries on a larger scale than we usually find in American congregations. They see doing justice as a normal part of their Christian experience.

The goal of this paper, then, is to consider how a fresh engagement with Wesley's teachings on the transformation of the heart (affections), especially as he reads parts of the collection of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, contributes to the needed motivation for broadening and sustaining congregational efforts at justice. With help from a cognitive view of the emotions, we can see the inherent relationships between thought, feeling, and action. Emotions do epistemic work. They contribute to our understanding of reality and, in this way, serve as springs of action. The interaction of understanding and emotion, under the illuminating and motivating power of the Holy Spirit, is the ground where affective changes occur in growing disciples, a growth that "naturally"[4] leads to actions of love for neighbor.

I am (painfully, perhaps) aware that this paper, with its particular focus, does not seem to fit well within the category of practical theology. It leans heavily on a philosophical view of experience. I hope that, by the end of the paper, I have succeeded in showing how practical this work truly is, which means that, if we want to see the goal realized of getting more people more involved in justice efforts for longer periods of time; that is, if love for neighbor could characterize our congregations as much as love for God, then we might see some of the kinds of change for good that we desire.

Ministry Context

Before moving to those points, however, I offer a basic description of the ministry context in which I hope to see this project realized. My ministry setting prompting this paper is a

[4] The scare quotes suggest the difficulty with the word "naturally" here since growth in Christ always happens under the work of the Spirit. At the same time, I am seeking to communicate that growth in Christ always includes a motivating growth in love for neighbor that seems natural as a person grows in love for God.

rural county in southern Kansas, USA. Cowley County has a population of slightly more than 34,000 people. The median household income is $55,726 (£42,867). According to the Century Foundation, federal guidelines set the poverty level at $25,926 annually for a family of two adults and two children.[5] The percentage of persons in our county living in poverty is 16%, six percentage points higher than the average for the state of Kansas.[6] These figures give us a good idea of the level of income the poor in our area receive and help us to grasp how dire the situation is for them.

In Arkansas City, where I serve as the pastor of the United Methodist congregation, the poverty level, at 15:7%, closely approximates that of the county.[7] In a city of, in round figures, 11,500 people, the data indicate that a few more than 1,800 people live in poverty. A sizable portion of these 1,800 are children. In a small town like ours, it means that the poor quite literally are our neighbors.[8]

Our congregation consists of approximately one hundred and twenty participants. In 2023, we averaged eighty-three in worship attendance, which provides a reasonable reference point for defining what "active" means, and sparks imagination about what might happen were more congregants to capture the vision of justice and get involved in efforts to make sure our neighbors have what they need.[9]

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[5] https://tcf.org/content/report/defining-economic-deprivation-need-reset-poverty-line/?gad_source=1. Accessed 7/11/24.
[6] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/cowleycountykansas. Accessed 7/11/24.
[7] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/arkansascitycitykansas/POP010220. Accessed 7/11/24.
[8] The local ministerial alliance collaborates to support a robust, multi-dimensional service called Angels in the Attic, which came about as the result of the Salvation Army store leaving Arkansas City a few years ago. A local donor gave a grant to start Angels in the Attic, which receives support from local churches and from grants that staff secure.
[9] One other complicating factor is that, though we have active young adults, youth and children, the congregation has a high percentage of retired and elderly people, some of whom are infirm.

The present congregation is the result of the merging of two congregations, one the old, established, "First Church," with a building located further away from the center of the city and the other congregation from the Evangelical United Brethren tradition whose building sits close to the city center. The legal steps for the merger were finalized in January, 2022. We describe ourselves as one church with two campuses since we still own both properties. The "downtown" church building is well-placed for ministries with the poor, so we operate from that base, with one exception. The church raises money each year to provide vouchers for families to purchases new shoes for their school aged children. On a designated Sunday afternoon in August, children and their parents or guardians come to the old "First Church" building to pick up their vouchers and to receive free haircuts.

Otherwise, we run our ministries to the poor from the downtown property. From this location, the church provides English as a second language courses in the Fall and, if needed, in the Spring. This ministry usually involves approximately ten people to teach and to provide child-care and administrative support. On the same evening, six or seven church members prepare and distribute the "Share Meal" to needy[10] neighborhood folk. Originally a meal served around tables, it became a carry-out service because of the COVID pandemic. This fact, coupled with a small team doing the work week in and week out, led to the decision to leave it as a carry-out meal after the pandemic had eased.

Less than a year ago, we started a ministry called "Prayer Plus" in conjunction with the share meal. Each week three volunteers chat with clients and offer prayer for anyone requesting

[10] We have a policy of serving anyone without question and we allow people to take food packages for others. This situation raises questions for which we have no good answers.

it. We wanted to get to know the better the people we serve to learn more about their needs and to do what we can to help.[11] A total of nine people participate in Prayer Plus.

One sees that the number of volunteers for these ministries compared to the number of active church members is small, even when factoring in the children too young to get directly involved.[12] We celebrate the faithfulness of the regular participants, but it also calls for reflection, since a relatively large portion of adult members do not participate in ministries of love for neighbor.[13]This scenario is common to many congregations and it leaves people with a sense of inevitability that these factors are "just the way things are," so we should just settle for it.

Is there any truly effective way to engage more people with hearts full of love for God and neighbor, to do what Scripture portrays as the normal Christian life, that is, to work at giving all persons their due? There is, and it starts with a fresh exploration of a part of our Wesleyan/Methodist theological tradition in conjunction with contemporary work on the cognitive view of emotions in philosophy. This effort shows the practical effect of doctrine's work in hearts. It helps us to see that transformed affections, which under gird motivation to minister for justice, have an explicitly intellectual component that must not be overlooked.

A Cognitive View of Emotions

A cognitive view of the emotions asserts that emotions do epistemic work. They help us to know what is real and, putting us in touch with reality, they provoke action responses. Emotions are not mere subjective states, but responses to external objects and situations. Some

[11] One example: a woman was having difficulty with her washer. She lacked funds to have it fixed and her landlord was slow in fixing it, so she was stuck without a washer. She agreed to allow a church member to come to her house to diagnose the problem. He was able to do so. The church purchased the part, and he installed it to get the washer functional.

[12] One middle school student helps every week with the Share Meal. Some youth help on occasion with other aspects of these community ministries.

[13] Of course, it is possible that some do regularly participate in ways not known to me or to other church members, but the impression of non-involvement remains.

emotions are easily recognized as such since they relate to specific emotion-causing episodes. Some philosophers use the term description "higher cognitive emotions"[14] to refer to feelings like compassion and love, which have objects, but are not as episodic as a feeling like fear or embarrassment. The cognitive view asserts that emotions are "about" something.[15] As Ronald DeSousa states, "Emotions are not mere projections but apprehensions of real properties in the world."[16] They respond to what philosophers call "salient" properties, those features that stand out to the awareness of the person experiencing the emotion. An easy example of salience is the experience of encountering a snarling dog. The salient properties are the dog's growls and bared teeth. The reasonable response is fear.

Salience is related to what the philosopher Bennet Helm calls "import." A person's feelings in response to an object carry care or concern of some kind. The object of experience therefore has import or value-weighted meaning.[17] The concept of import helps us to see that emotions have an evaluative function.[18] The feeling of fear in the presence of a snarling dog carries with it the evaluation, "dangerous." Any emotional experience possesses an evaluative quality the moves a person to respond. It thus helps us to see, further, as Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni argue, that emotions reveal action-readiness. "Emotions are intimately connected with

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[14] For this phrase, "higher cognitive emotions," I refer to Paul E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See especially chapter 5, "The Higher Cognitive Emotions: Some Research Programs, 100-136.

[15] In this way they differ from moods, which do not have a particular object or relate to a specific situation.

[16] Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press), 201. See also Michael S. Brady, *Emotional Insight: The Epistemic Role of Emotional Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 61-62.

[17] Bennet Helm, *Emotional Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 32.

[18] Some philosophers define emotions as evaluative judgments. See Marth Nussbaum, for example, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chapter 1, "Emotions as Judgments of Value," pp. 19-88.

types of [felt] action readiness."[19] They *move* us, sometimes literally, because emotions have a bodily dimension that some cause actual physical movement.

With this basic description of the cognitive features of emotions in place, let's move to reflections closer to the concern of this paper, with an example from scripture. Consider Isaiah's experience of seeing the Lord in the temple (Isaiah 6:1-8 NRSV):

> I saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him…and one called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the threshold shook…and the house filled with smoke. And I said, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

The object of import, to use Helm's language,[20] is the Lord, Yahweh. Some of the salient properties of the Lord are "high and lifted up" and "the hem of his garment" filling the temple. While we think of angelic as distinct from God, they, make up part of the reality Isaiah experiences, so we should add them as salient features. Glorious and frightening and other-worldly themselves, they repeat "Holy, Holy, Holy," emphasizing Yahweh's fearsome holiness. The temple shakes, as in an earthquake. There is smoke. All these aspects of Isaiah's experience clearly have evaluative qualities. Isaiah feels acutely what he sees and hears, and responds (action-readiness) with self-evaluation, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips."

As the vision continues, Isaiah responds to more input. He receives forgiveness when the angel touches his lips with the burning coal: "Your guilt has departed." Does the knowledge of being forgiven move him to action? Yes. When God asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah's answer: "Here am I; send me!"

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[19] Julien A. Deonna and Fabrice Teroni, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2012), 79.
[20] I use "object" in the formal sense. Clearly God is Subject, as in the I-Thou relation of Martin Buber's work.

The Isaiah example, of course, is dramatic. It has the advantage, however, of making the cognitive view of emotions observable in religious experience and so is a step in the right direction. Let's move to an example that falls more within the range of "normal" spiritual experiences, but still carries the cognitive-emotional force needed to move someone to action.

Before turning to John Wesley's teachings in relations to the Sermon on the Mount, I add one more piece of analysis that helps bridge to Wesley's language. Up to this point I have been using the word "emotions and easily recognizable. John Wesley used the word "affections," as well as "tempers" or "dispositions to refer thoughts and intentions that carry emotional tones, even if not always identified as emotions as such. Psychologists talk about the affective dimension, that is, a person's feelings and attitudes in relation to a wide range of situations and experiences. Andrew Tallon, in his book, *Head and Heart*, explores the deep links between the cognitive and affective dimensions of a person in a way that helps us see Wesley's anthropology and soteriology in a contemporary way.

Tallon uses the terms "affective" or "affection" in a way that works well with Wesley's teachings. Thought and feeling join with a sense of the need to act in ways appropriate to the moment. Thoughts are never "just thoughts" shorn of affective tones. Emotions are never "just feelings" separate from cognitive inputs. Action results. Tallon notes "the irreducibly triadic structure of consciousness," which he also calls "triune consciousness" to capture this deep integration of thought, feeling, and volition.[21]

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the relevance of the foregoing material for the goal of congregational change that stimulates more people to get involved in sustained efforts to help bring about justice. Few people are motivated by theory-laden analyses and abstractions

[21] Tallon, Head.and.Heart¿Affection?Cognition?Volition.as.Triune.Consciousness, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 123.

and even less so by a constant appeal to a sense of obligation that they may not feel, either because they don't have adequate knowledge or because they don't really know why they should care. Even talking about love of God and neighbor has negligible effect apart from *feeling* love for God and neighbor and feeling love for God neighbor very much involves thinking about who God really and what God really does. A person's affections combine the understanding (intellectual grasp) with emotion, which, in turn, reveals a person's characteristic responses to people and situations. Affections can be trained through good teaching and relevant practices. In the present study, some of John Wesley's interpretation of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount serve well to accomplish the goal of moving a higher percentage of congregants to see commitment to justice as a normal part of their Christian discipleship.

Reappropriating John Wesley's Teaching

It is unfortunate that John Wesley's anthropology and soteriology have been put to use over the years in truncated ways. Seminary students, as well as many lay people, have learned to refer to Wesley's description of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace without encouragement to reflect on its significance and therefore feeling the force of those doctrines. "What does Wesley's doctrine of grace have to do with justice?" we might ask. It is easy to think of Wesley as a man of his times, with a pre-modern view of social conditions found inadequate for today's complexities. It is well known that some of Wesley's heirs gravitate toward topics of personal piety and others to matters of justice and, though they often acknowledge the deep connection between the two, in reality they remain separate. Much of Wesley's theology is thought to be good for personal spirituality but not particularly helpful for efforts at justice. To the extent that this is true, this is where we err.

In this section, I want to pull in a representative sample of John Wesley's teachings to show two things: (1) His understanding of the change that happen in human hearts under the transforming work of grace remains insightful, especially in light of the body of philosophical thought I have tried to summarize in this paper. (2) His view on what moves people to have the mind of Christ and to walk as Christ walked, to use one of his favorite expressions, provides a point of departure for stimulating a growing number of members of a congregation to get involved and stay involved in justice ministries. That point of departure is the experience of God's love, an understanding of the needs of neighbors that carry people past the step of meeting a specific need to getting to know people in need and finding ways to help them go further toward resolution of real needs rather than stopping with the immediate needs. To be sure, meeting the obvious needs must continue, but justice seen in the light of Christ takes the calls the Christian disciple into deeper and further attempts to assist in real change for people in need.

The starting point for thinking about how to apply Wesley to congregational growth is his anthropology. The three-dimensional image of God resonates well with the foregoing scholarly description regarding the deep connections of thought, feeling, and action. The natural image of God refers to understanding or intellect. The political image refers, of course, to humanity's responsibility for governance of the created order, but includes the power of decision and action.

Most important for this paper is the moral image, which Wesley understood as primarily characterized by love.[22] Since God's nature is love (1 John 4:8), we who are made in God's image and likeness are created to love. It starts with loving God supremely as a recognition of our dependence on God and God's goodness to supply our needs. Just as, in our created nature, we are made to love God, we are also made to love fellow humans. This is why the second greatest

[22] John Wesley, "The New Birth," in The.Works.of.John.Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 2:188. Hereafter identified as WJW. See also his sermon, "The Image of God" in WJW, 4:

commandment involves love for neighbor and even love for enemy (truly possible only through the transforming power of Christ). This point bears serious reflection. It is easy for people, in something of a rote manner, to pick up this basic knowledge without grasping the implications.

The moral image of God includes that, as image bearers, humans are inherently *affective* beings, a fact that is demonstrated in a myriad of ways. Here it is crucial to remember that affection coinheres with cognition, with thinking. The revelation of our affective nature should be understood in intellectual terms as much as in the conventional emotional ones. The interest of a researcher in her field of study reveals humanity's affective nature just as readily as love for family and friends, or romantic interest, or the desire for a beloved hobby. The moral image of God as having to do with the affections is therefore never to be construed separately from the natural and political images.[23] In this way the previous reflection on cognition and emotion help us see Wesley's point and serves to lay the groundwork for understanding how it is not only possible but expected that people see efforts to create a just community as normative and, further, to understand and feel the love of God and the plight of the human condition in such a way as to desire and act toward the realization of a just community.

In sin, the image of God is distorted, effaced, and ruined. Wesley's primary terms for sin are pride and self-will.[24] Sin is self-preoccupation, overweening self-interest, self-love beyond all proportion, placing the desires of the self above all other desires. The results, according to Scripture and John Wesley, are anger, malice, hatred, and covetousness. Christians would do well to ponder how these affections reveal themselves currently in the wide range of injustices at work in the world.

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[23] We take care not to imagine that God created humans with three images of God. I state the obvious, but for the sake of emphasis, it is important. There is one image of God having three dimensions.
[24] See, for example, "On Sin in Believers," WJW, 1:320 and "The Repentance of Believers," WJW, 1:338.

Turning to Wesley's view of the Christian life, we find that authentic Christian discipleship necessarily involves transformation of the affections.[25] The transformation of the affections involves the whole image of God, including, therefore, the intellectual and political features of human experience. To state the matter bluntly, our feelings and actions do not change in the long-term if our understanding does not change.

To this point in the summary of Wesley's thought, I have covered material that is fairly obvious to anyone knowledgeable of it. It is therefore time to face the question of motive. Simply having the right ideas about love and justice does not provide the motivation for people to stay actively engaged for the long haul in activities that aim at justice, much less to try at all. Where lie the resources for actual transformation that actually moves people to risk serving others in a way that approximates Jesus' character and call for all disciples?

A key aspect of Wesley's understanding of Jesus' teachings collected in the Sermon on the Mount is the relationship between law and gospel. Wesley argued, for example, in Discourse #5 on the Sermon on the Mount, "There is no contrariety at all between the law and the gospel; there is no need for the law to pass away in order to the establishing of the gospel. If they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law: if as promises, of the gospel,"[26] This statement shows a key conviction of Wesley's. In the "gospel dispensation,"[27] God's commands become God's promises under the New Covenant. To put the matter grammatically, the imperative ("You shall") becomes the future indicative ("you will"). The main scripture grounding this conviction is Jeremiah 31:31-34, where the prophet states that God's law will be written on the hearts of God's people. A good God gave the law to fallen humanity out of supreme love. Again

[25] WJW, 2:188.
[26] "Sermon on the Mount, #5, in WJW, 1:554.
[27] For the use of "gospel dispensation," see for example, "Christian Perfection" in WJW, 2:109.

Wesely: "Love moved him to publish the law. Love moved him to give the written law to Moses And the prophets to interpret and proclaim it…until, when the fullness of time was come, he sent his only-begotten Son, 'not to destroy the law, but to fulfill,' to confirm every jot and tittle thereof, till having wrote it in the hearts of all his children."[28]

Importantly, in this vein, according to God's original purpose, the (moral) law, "renders to all their due"[29] and that rendering to all their due is firmly grounded in God's love. Precisely because of love, we seek to render to all their due. In Christ, the law is written again on the hearts of believers, and now, in Christ, what the law could not do because of sin becomes once again within the power, through God's grace, of believers to do what the law requires. As Wesley proclaims in his sermon, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," "We work because God works in us." God's law requires giving all their due. God's love shed abroad in the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit moves and enables disciples to commit to giving people their due. It is a normative and normal expression of Christian discipleship.

With regard to motivation, then, we can take some of Wesley's reflections on the Beatitudes as grist for the mill of imagining the transformation that moves people to engage in justice. Here I seek to demonstrate how the cognitive view of emotions as evaluative action-responses, and a picture involving the whole person as embodied triune consciousness (to use Andrew Tallon's phrase from earlier) give us good reason to think that pursuit of justice is not only normative for all Christians but within reach.

Wesley described the Beatitudes as "the sum of all true religion."[30] Exegeting the Greek term *makarios*, "blessed," as "happy," Wesley links happiness and holiness, which is inherently

[28] "The Original, Nature, Properties and Use of the Law" in WJW, 2:14.
[29] "Original, Nature," WJW, 2:12.
[30] "Discourse #1," Sermon on the Mount, WJW, 1:475.

related to justice in the sense of moral goodness *par excellence*. To be holy in God's eschatological kingdom, is to be happy. To be happy is to live in the psychological "sweet spot" of acting according to God's patterns of justice. [31] This is a significant position. In the re-creation of the image of God in humans, we regain and advance in what was lost in sin. In creation, to do the will of God is happiness. It is pure joy. In the restoration of the image of God through Christ, that same happiness applies. This is clearly more of a motivating impulse than simple duty because we somehow know that doing justice is just the right thing to do.

There is not sufficient space to explore each of the eight Beatitudes, even though it would be an illuminating and salutary exercise to do so. In the remainder of this section, I have chosen three that seem best for reflecting on justice and on seeing how people are motivated in the vision of the Beatitudes to pursue it. With each Beatitude one can discern the three-dimensional aspects of the person as surveyed above. I will make brief observations along those lines.

The Beatitudes start with poverty of spirit, which Wesley describes as a kind of humble self-awareness, particularly the awareness of need for God's forgiveness and grace in the face of our ongoing weakness. Poverty of spirit is, Wesley insisted, a much-needed *temper* (the affective dimension of a person shaped by grace into a character strength). Poverty of spirit results when one gains proper self-awareness, an accurate understanding of self along with an honest, heartfelt acceptance of the meaning of that condition. This awareness comes in light of the revelation of God's righteousness (justice), all-encompassing power, *and* steadfast love in covenant faithfulness, all salient features of God experienced in the human encounter with God. To borrow a term

[31] We need to think of happiness less in terms of a subjective feeling of well-being and more in the sense of that subjective feeling as a by-product of being and doing as God created and re-created us to be and to do. One helpful interpretation of Makarios comes from Scot McKnight commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, where he translates "blessed" as "God's favor is upon. Scot McKnight, Sermon.on.the.Mount, Story of God Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, Kindle Version), location 1084 of 8439.

from Simeon Zahl, it is to recognize one's plight in the inescapable presence of God as well as to understand and accept the gift of God's saving grace.[32]

One cannot manufacture poverty of spirit. In grasping finally what motivates people to commit to any activity in the Christian life, but especially to justice, this point must not be overlooked. There is no faking poverty of spirit. When one sees the reality of one's condition in light of God's holy love and begins to understand the great gift given by God to humans, one sees not only oneself but others in this light. It contributes to the sense of the shared human condition between a follower of Jesus and the needy person that follower is called to serve. It is not a big stretch to say that poverty of spirit is the beginning of what motives us to seek justice for all.

Jumping to "Blessed (happy) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," we get an increased sense of the cognitive-affective experience that can prompt action for justice. Wesley notices Jesus' use of appetites – hunger and thirst – to point at how basic they are to the disciple's life. The metaphors of hunger and thirst speak to the basic human need for justice but also, since the hunger and thirst are not literal bodily experiences, we see that Jesus is talking about a desire as basic as an appetite. Keeping in mind that the Beatitudes, from a Wesleyan point of view, are not ethical demands to be aspired to but ultimately to fail at reaching. Rather, they are eschatological promises the disciple can seek and receive from God. Clearly hunger for justice is not a matter of human contrivance, of "working up" the energy, but of participating in the power of divine grace. Wesley's vision of law and gospel once again comes to the fore. Those persons who have entered into the new covenant community are having God's law written on their hearts. A sincere disciple of Jesus, therefore, begins to *feel* the desire for righteousness, which motivates activity to realize it. By definition, one experiencing God's covenant faithfulness wants it for

[32] Simeon Zahl, The.Holy.Spirit.in.Christian.Experience, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 158 ff.

others as well as for self. Bad moments, "slip-ups," and pockets of recalcitrance remain in the heart, but as one grows, in increasingly smaller episodes.

In expounding on "Blessed are the peacemakers," Wesley goes right to the second greatest commandment, love of neighbor. In the list of Beatitudes it follows "Blessed are the pure in heart," so the pure in heart and the peacemakers are, in a way, paired. Wesley (again) reads as demonstrating the fulfillment of the promise to have the law written on the believer's heart. To be pure in heart is to be a peacemaker because to love God is to love the neighbor (we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love our sister or brother, whom we have seen, 1 John 4:20). To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to be a peacemaker because one desires justice for all. Wesley says that a true peacemaker in Jesus' sense is one that "steps over all these narrow bounds [e.g. family, friends, acquaintances] that he may do good to every man; that he may some way or other manifest his love to neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies."[33]

How does one "step over all those narrow bounds?" This question lies at the crux of the challenge to expand the number of congregants serving others and working for justice. Biologically, it seems to go against our nature.[34] Whether we can adequately grasp the science or not, most people live with a sense of the limits of our affection and compassion and those limits usually start to exclude people with whom we do not already have a close relationship. But this is precisely why serious reflection on the transformation of the person (intellect, emotions, and will) assumed in the Beatitudes is so needed.

This brief reflection on a few of the Beatitudes offers the opportunity for thoughtful consideration of the motivating power they hold. That consideration is aided by reading the

[33] "Discourse #3, Sermon on the Mount, WJW, 1:518.

[34] From a strictly evolutionary point of view, for the perpetuation of our genetic make-up, humans live altruistically in relation to close kin, but the further away from the close kin other humans stand, the less inclined to altruism we are. It seems that biological nature goes against Jesus' call to love the stranger.

Beatitudes through the lens of Wesley's understanding of how, under God's powerful grace, law becomes gospel and command becomes promise. The work of God always includes all three dimensions of a person as described earlier in this paper under the cognitive view of the emotions. If Wesley's view of the Christian life has merit (and I clearly think it does), then we can see in these resources the possibilities for bringing about positive change in congregations that could stimulate positive changes in their larger communities.

Implications and Possible Actions

The first implication for the line of thought in this paper is paradoxical. To encourage greater participation by congregants in activities that seek justice, we don't begin by teaching about justice per se. We start by teaching about the nature of God and the disciples' re-created nature by the work of the Spirit. The Wesleyan understanding of this work on the affections is helpful and timely, especially in light of the modern cognitive view of the emotions. It is important to remember, however, that we are not simply "teaching Wesley." We are introducing congregants to fundamental truths about God and about themselves.

Second, pastors, teachers, and small group leaders persistently and systematically encourage personal reflection about one's affective responses to those teachings. We need to draw attention to the fact that, as we listen to a presentation or read a book or article, we are responding affectively (emotionally) while we read. To use traditional language, a person can ask, "What is happening in my heart as I listen/read? What do I feel?" Does the person find resistance to the idea? Apprehension? A degree of excitement? Does a person feel moved or inspired to do something? Is the feeling boredom, detachment, diffidence? All of these responses can tell a person something about the heart's posture toward the work of God. A person can learn the tools to evaluate the quality of one's Christian journey and face the challenges of growth.

Third, and crucially, the sort of teaching and reflection envisioned in these suggestions must always include the necessary connection between growth in knowledge of God and of self to what that growth means for other people, for the needy, for one's community. Workshops and training on justice and developing practical ministries along those lines should be shown to fit organically with the other discipleship teachings and activities of a congregation.

Fourth, these teachings, along with the practice of honest self-reflection (a good reason for the importance of small groups) need to become part of the ethos of a congregation. As leadership and strategic planning consultants have been saying for a long time, a church's vision, mission, and values must flow organically from one to the other. One of the reasons that more people don't get more consistently involved in justice actions stems from our consistently casting a vision that connects personal growth and thriving with love of neighbor. There are many ways to foster such an ethos, but one of the main ways is to help a few people truly get to know their neighbors and then have them talk about how the experience has changed their views and their desires.

The research for this paper shows that attending to the human heart as understood through a cognitive view of the emotions shows that doctrinal instruction is a very practical matter. Motivation to engage in the demanding work of justice (once more, giving people their due) cannot include a larger and growing share of a congregation if we ignore what truly inspires and transforms the heart. What if we worked at helping people grow in self-awareness, according to (in light of) those doctrines? What if we invited people to recognize how they respond emotionally or affectively to the content of Christian doctrine? What if we stressed that honest self-assessment in light of what people know of Jesus' nature and the gospel, is a means of grace, too? That there is no shame in admitting our poverty of spirit or our lack of hunger and thirsting for

righteousness? If we could encourage to recognize how their affections and their understanding are deeply, inextricably linked, and that at this junction point is where we find what motivates us. If being a Christian is to have the mind of Christ and to walk as Christ walk (Philippians 2:5-8), as John Wesley often said, then growing in love for God and for neighbor is not a distant ideal but a real and realistic goal. And the world will be a better place for Wesleyan Christians realizing this goal.