

How to Not Give Up

What's up fam my name is Marcus and I'm one of the pastors here at City Church. For those that don't know today is Kent's birthday. He's one of the pastors here, and I hear he really likes it when people that hit him on the shoulder for his birthday so feel free to do that if you know him. And if you don't here's a picture of him. Not sure why he likes it, it's a weird thing to do, but I mean it is his birthday. If you have your bibles with you turn with me to **1 Peter 5:7**. We'll actually cover a lot of passages but we will start in 1 Peter. If you're new here or I haven't met you yet I would love to meet you after the gathering. So today we are closing out our series **Precious in His Sight**. We have covered a ton this past six weeks as it pertains to race and how God has a heart for people of all ethnicities in the Bible. We've talked about how each of us are made in the imago dei, in the image of God. We've talked about how the sin of oppression disrupts the very fabric of God's creation. We talked about how to practically go about addressing the injustices in the world. And last week, Kent preached on how we as believers should talk about race to one another and to others. How our posture should be one of humility and gentleness and always being eager to maintain unity amongst us.

Now as we close today, I just want to say how glad I am that we started this series. I'm glad we've been wrestling with questions with our LifeGroups. It's been cool to see people message us with encouragement on how this has impacted their lives and how they see more clearly how God sees other human beings made in his image. How they've shared this series with their friends and family. And at the same time, I don't know about you but much of this can feel overwhelming. Like for real for real. While this series has been good, the world around us still goes on. In the midst of learning what it looks like to see each other made in the image of God, my asian brothers and sisters are mourning because of the more recent anti-asian hate stuff that has been going on. And for me personally it feels like as a black man with each encouraging thing I learn from the scriptures about how God sees me and others, the world around me shows me a different picture.

I remember the feeling when I heard about Philando Castile getting shot by the police for simply reaching for his license. The license that he was asked to show. I remember ball'n my eyes out because it was the moment I realized that could have been me. I remember mourning over death after death of black people in the streets, in their homes while they were sleeping, while they were out running. I remember the fear from witnessing a white lady in Central Park, who seemingly was racist, when she thought a black dude who was out watching birds was out to get her in some form or fashion. This was a personal thing because I actually enjoy watching and listening to birds. And this for sure got to me because I was like that could be me one day. I could literally be in a park birdwatching,

someone there could call the cops claiming they 'feel threatened' by me being there, and then it's all over.

I see politicians talk out of both sides of their mouth. One minute they claim to be for black people but their policies don't reflect said backing. I see the lives of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and countless others and wonder how much of a vapor life is and how fragile it can be. That one minute you're here and the next you're not. And how true that is of black people here in America. I see why black people are shouting our lives matter because I see the hopelessness in their eyes. To fight for your imago dei when others are not fighting for it for you that is a tall order to say the least. This is the type of stuff that makes me want to be like, you know what I'm good I think. I think I'm done thinking about this all the time. I'm tired of continually raising a voice for something that it feels like half of the country doesn't even think is happening. I'm tired of continually going out of my way to show people that they don't have to be scared of me just because my skin is darker than theirs. I'm tired of taking a different route because a white lady is walking down the same path as me and I'm afraid that she in some way or form is threatened by my appearance. I think I'm done looking at the news cause look where this has gotten me. Sadness. Anger. Cynicism. Fear.

I see my white brothers and sisters in this very room fighting to know more. Learning what it looks like to lament. Reading books. Texting their black brothers and sisters more often. Actually engaging in fruitful conversations about race. And know that your black brothers and sisters are grateful for your efforts in all that. But in all of that, I'm sure you have felt this whole "two steps forward, 1.75 steps back" reality as well. I'm sure at times you have felt like giving up, because it just seems like such a massive, monumental task. And it might feel like what you're doing is not enough to do much of anything. In many ways it might feel like what you are doing is only a drop in the bucket that is the need for justice in our world.

So to those of us who are feeling any and all of this, to wrap up this series, I want to bring us some encouragement and endurance from the scriptures. I want to give us the good news of the gospel so we don't throw up our hands and give up in the fight for meaningful change. Because if you're just looking around at the progress (or lack of it), there are going to be plenty of reasons to give up—to just conclude that the fight isn't worth the trouble. But when we stop to take a look at the Scriptures, we find plenty of encouragement and endurance to sustain us. So that's what we're going to look at today. I want to show us where we find endurance and hope in the fight against injustice. And I want to do that by looking at all three persons of the Trinity. That's right, I want to get some practical help from (what a guy named Eric Mason calls) the Trinitarian Dopeness

of our God. How focusing and considering the three persons of the Trinity gives us strength for the fight.

Consider the Father

So when it comes to addressing injustices in our world I want us to first consider the Father. As we've talked about God cares very much about the injustices of this world. He's also very active in working towards correcting all of those wrongs to do away with it all together, more on that in a bit. But in the here and now, how does the Father help us to not give up specifically? I think we can find that in **1 Peter 5:7**:

Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you [look to your neighbor and say he cares for you].

There is a certain kind of weight that comes with addressing and fighting the injustices of the world. As we've said before America was built on slavery and it's hard to erradict the effects of over 400 years of oppression on a people group as quickly as we may want to.

These effects can lead to anxieties and various burdens we feel are insurmountable. And so what 1 Peter here tells us to do is to cast our anxieties and burdens on the Lord. Now we've talked about casting our anxieties before in another sermon but this idea of casting is action-oriented. Rather than just sitting back and waiting on God to do something about our anxiety and pressures we are feeling, Peter saysh, hey fam, cast that on the Father. That is actually how we deal with our burdens.

Charles Spurgeon put it eloquently when he talked about casting our anxieties and burdens on the Lord.

This work of casting can be so difficult that we need to use two hands to do it: the hand of prayer and the hand of faith. Prayer tells God what the care is, and asks God to help, while faith believes that God can and will do it. Prayer spreads the letter of trouble and grief before the Lord, and opens ail its budget, and then faith cries, I believe that God cares, and cares for me; I believe that he will bring me out of my distress, and make it promote his own glory.

So he says casting your burdens requires us praying to the Father and believing that he will do the very work that needs to be done. Whether through you or someone else.

You know, there is a certain humility that comes with casting our burdens and anxieties on the Lord. There is a certain vulnerability that accompanies it. It's very easy when the going gets tough, that for some of us we double down in our efforts with no mention or

look towards the Lord. We keep trucking along without considering the one who has called us to do the very thing that we want to do. For others we do give up but the same problem exists because we too don't look to the Father as someone who cares enough to enter into this with us. We look at it as our fight and our fight alone.

But oh if we were to cast our burdens on the Lord; how much more do you think we will be in the fight because of what the Lord brings to the table?

I'll tell you about a time where I had to learn what it meant to 'cast my anxieties' on the Father. A couple years ago when my wife found out she was pregnant, we were overjoyed by the idea of becoming parents. We had been trying for a while and once we found out, man it was pretty cool. I didn't know what it would look like to be a dad but slowly day by day the idea of becoming a dad was starting to hit me. Meanwhile Mel like many expectant mothers was already in that headspace of mommy mode. We told our parents who were excited. We told close friends and LifeGroup. It was an exciting time. Then a few weeks in, we found out that we were going to have what's called an ectopic pregnancy, which is miscarriage caused by the baby implanting outside of the uterus. And one where the mother is in danger of dying. So Mel had to have emergency surgery or risk dying and needless to say we were devastated. We both went about grief in different ways. Mel was very upset with the Lord because as she would have said how can God allow this to happen. And for me I buried it a lot until I had an anxiety attack that made me deal with my grief. For both of us our burdens became too heavy to bear for us. We needed the Lord to bear them for us. We were in a place where we had to practically *cast our anxieties* on him.

Now I feel like as Americans, we may have an uphill battle with casting our anxieties on God. Because typically Americans are taught to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, to hustle, to do our own things our own way. It's this idea of succeeding without anyone's help. And maybe you have or maybe you haven't been heavily influenced by it but know this individualism is the very air we breathe here. You can't escape it in many ways. And so when it comes to fighting injustices there may be a strong temptation to think of things as our fight to bear. We must do the thing. But hear me say this fam, without God, doing things your own way when it comes to justice will end up in vain one way or another. The burden will get to you eventually. The fight will overwhelm you. The anxieties will keep you up at night. But if we consider the Father, before we enter in and especially while we fight, we can lean on him to care for us and to sustain us like no one else can. As [Psalm 18:2](#) puts it:

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

[somebody say the Lord is my stronghold]

Your Father in heaven will be the very rock you need to cling to when things feel shaky underneath you. He will be your shield and fortress when all amounts of things come your way. He is ultimately your salvation and stronghold to which you can have hope.

So how do we practically live this out. Before you engage in any form of justice work go to the Father and pray for guidance and favor. **Pray for where he thinks you should put your efforts and your energy towards. Ask him to go before you and soften hearts with the people you will come in contact with.** And don't just do this once but over the course of your doing justice. In Micah 6 it talks about live kindness, do justice, and walk humbly with God. And here's what I want you to see, when you do justice by going to the Lord you are in effect walking humbly with God

So consider the Father before and during when it comes to addressing injustices in our world. And remember that the Father is someone who hates injustice and is angry at injustices with you. In fact, he hates it so much that He sent his son to pay for the injustices of this world.

Consider Jesus

And with that I want us to consider Jesus.

Hebrew 12:2–3 it says

2 For the joy set before him he (Jesus) endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Now that first part of Hebrews we will address later but I want us to zero in on verse 3. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In Jesus' earthly ministry here, he had opposition and you will most likely have some too.

Maybe it's someone on your social feed who tries to combat you every post you put out when you try to show the disparities in this world. For some maybe it's when you try to point out an instance of injustice and people give you the 'hey let's not be negative or divisive.' For others maybe it's when you try to work towards correcting injustice and you get a 'you're just gonna make those people content in their laziness.' Or when you try to

give your time or resources towards justice and people call you a Leftist or whatever insult of choice. A few of us may even suffer some sort of physical resistance or attack.

And all of that is because when you stand up to injustice you are opposing the very nature of sin's hold on someone. Places like Ephesians 6 make it clear that the injustice and sin we witness in the world actually has powerful forces of darkness behind it, so it makes sense that you will encounter some resistance when you oppose those things.

And in those moments of push back there easily could be temptation to be too tired to fight anymore or to just lose heart completely. And so we look to the cross as confidence knowing that Jesus, who was perfect, received push back for bringing the kingdom near.

And as his followers we practically get to bring the kingdom near as well by doing the very things Jesus did.

When Jesus came onto the scene he proclaimed this as his entry point in [Luke 4:18](#)

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed

This was what Jesus was sent to do. He said so himself. Jesus saw that part of his ministry included helping others. Proclaiming liberty or freedom to the captives. Helping those who are blind to have sight. Both physically and spiritually. Helping those who are oppressed. And honestly much more. And as his followers we too get to proclaim good news to the poor. We get to proclaim liberty to the captives. We get to help those who are blind to see. And in light of our sermon series, we get to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Jesus bowed to the Father's will and took on the injustices of the world. So when you experience opposition from friends, family members, or just people who want to oppose you addressing and fighting the injustices of the world, Jesus knows what it feels like. He can empathize with you and understand what you feel. He bowed to the Father's will so that justice could be served and the Holy Spirit could come.

Consider the Spirit

Now in the midst of addressing and fighting injustices, not sure if you caught this, but Jesus started Luke 4:18 with The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

The first thing Jesus says is that the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and then he lists all the things he was called to do. As we consider the Father and consider Jesus know that we should also consider the Spirit.

The same Spirit that was upon the Lord to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recover of sight to the blind and to set at liberty those who are oppressed. The same spirit that empowered Jesus to do what he did, now empowers you to do similar things that he proclaimed and accomplished. So as you address and fight injustices in this world, like Jesus, the Spirit is right there with you.

Have you ever thought about that? The Spirit is the one that is empowering you and I right now. To do the very thing that we are talking about in this series to do? So not only does the Spirit help us to care for the injustices of this world, when we are caring for the broken and downtrodden, when we are standing up for the oppressed, when we are helping the abused and the marginalized...if we try to do all that continually on our own strength, we will be exhausted and burnt out in no time. See what we need is the power of the Spirit of God to help us to both start and sustain us through enacting justice. The Spirit can help us to not lose heart.

Now maybe you're hearing me and thinking, nah fam. That's Jesus dude. I get what he said back in Luke but that's Jesus. What he did is beyond what we can do. Which I get. It's Jesus.

Let's read something real quick. This is Jesus again in [John 14:12](#). Let's see what he says here:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater [somebody say greater] works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

So Jesus says we will do what again? Greater. Now that statement is so strong that it almost sounds like hyperbole, right? Almost sounds like he's exaggerating. 'Jesus raised the dead—how am I gonna do something greater than raising the dead? Jesus healed the multitudes, how am I gonna do something greater than that?'

Now there's plenty of debate as to what Jesus meant by that exactly. The leading theory is that Jesus meant greater as in quantity. As filled with the Spirit as Jesus was, he was still just one person. So obviously, millions of Jesus-followers around the globe, all filled with the Spirit are going to be able to do more things by the Spirit than just one person can do. But regardless of what it means that we are to do "greater things" by the power

of the Spirit, here's one thing we know it doesn't mean: it doesn't mean lesser, right. When Jesus says "you're gonna do greater things than I do," he doesn't mean, you're just gonna sort of play church and bide time till I come back for you.

So when it comes to justice and all that Jesus did, as followers of his we will do greater than Jesus. Now that would sound like blasphemy if it didn't come from Jesus himself. Which it did. And this is made possible by the Holy Spirit himself.

But the Spirit is not just here to empower you and that's it. At the end of the day the hope is that people who cause injustices will ultimately know him. That the very people that you encounter, who are on the opposite fence so to speak, will be the very people that when they meet you and other followers of Jesus will one day be transformed for the kingdom. This is the hope. Transformation for the sake of the gospel is what truly matters.

The Spirit is here to help transform our lives and those around us. He has the power to change hearts and we can pray in faith that he will do that. So through the Father we have one who hates injustice, through the Son we have one who took on all injustice and can empathize with us, and through the Spirit, we have a creator who brings new life around us. Which leads me to God's promises. The Lord has given us all this now to help us through this sinful world but He has also left us with a promise that when things feel really bad, we have a hope.

Consider the Promises

Remember when I said we would address that Hebrews passage a while back?

2 For the joy set before him he (Jesus) endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrew 12:2

It said for the *joy set before him he endured the cross*. I don't know about you but have you ever wondered what type of joy made Jesus want to endure the excruciating nature of the cross? It said joy, you don't have to do a double take. Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He knew the cross was coming. He knew he was going to die. And yet for the joy set before him he endured. He went along with it. He knew the opposition was coming. He knew his mortal body would not withstand the pain that was coming. And yet, powered by the Spirit, for the joy, come on somebody, for the joy set before him he pushed through, he endured.

So what is this joy and how do we tap into this as we fight for justice? Well for that I think we need to look to [2 Peter 3:13](#):

But God has promised [somebody say promised] us a new heaven and a new earth, where justice will rule.

When Jesus endured the cross he had the endgame in mind. He knew where everything was headed. He knew dying would pay for our sins. He knew dying would reconcile us to each other. He knew dying would reconcile us to the Father. And he knew that by dying he would be securing our place in a new heaven and a new earth where justice would rule. He knew that ultimately his work would not be in vain because ultimately justice would rule in the end. And not sin-marred justice, no, perfect and complete justice.

Here's another way the bible puts it in [1 Corinthians 15:58](#):

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Paul, before this verse, has just talked all about the coming new heavens and new earth...'where justice will reign.' And he closes that out by saying 'therefore, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because—*because!* (meaning, 'here's why...') you know your labor is not in vain. Because the future is already secure and God one day is going to establish perfect justice in the new heavens and new earth, you can know that no effort you put towards that reality NOW is wasted. Not one iota. Not even...a single drop.

See family, sometimes it might feel like a drop in a bucket isn't enough. It might feel like it doesn't matter. But Paul just said it's not in vain. You might feel like it's nothing—Paul just said it's something SUBSTANTIAL. When you're on Team New Heavens and New Earth, the final score has been settled. The final results were set in stone before you ever stepped foot in the game. When you are working towards the final result that God has already predetermined, every. single. thing. matters.

And furthermore—*you're* not the only one working towards it. You're with millions of other followers of Jesus across the globe working towards it; whose labor is not in vain. You're with other followers who are casting their anxieties onto the father. You're with other followers of Jesus who are looking to Jesus as their confidence. And you are with other followers of Jesus who are being empowered by the Holy Spirit to change the status quo and to see people come to know the Lord. So do you know what happens when each of you puts a drop in the bucket? The bucket eventually fills up.

To close I want to leave you with a part of Martin Luther King's famous I have a dream speech where he puts a lot of this beautifully. Speaking about the fight for racial justice, he says this:

If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.

And then...

We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now because I've been to the mountaintop...[He says he's seen God's plans for a new heavens and new earth, he's caught a vision of the new world coming where justice will rule] I've looked over and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land.

Church family, I want you to know today that we as a people, all races and ethnicities, those of us who follow after Jesus will get to the promised land. We will get to the promised land where justice will rule. And that's how we learn to not give up.

Let's pray

Lord. Thank you for this series. Thank you for speaking to us through your Spirit. Lord I want to pray over our people right now. I want to pray that you will sustain them and give them boldness and courage as they fight against the injustices of this world. Lord this world is full of sin and darkness and we know that we cannot drive out darkness without your light. So Lord will you help us in this fight. Be by our side as we take a stand for those who are made in your image but are not treated as so. Help us to know exactly where you want us to be, where you want our energies to lie. Help us to show people not just how justice looks like but to show people you in the midst of it all. Lord will you prepare all the hearts. Will you prepare those who will naturally oppose other who are made in your image. Help them to come to know you one day. Help them to feel in their heart of hearts that the injustices that they are causing will not stand and is not a part of your kingdom. Lord help us to walk in boldness and not cower or be afraid to stand. And Lord if we do grow tired, help us to cast our cares onto you knowing that because you care about justice way more than us that you will help us. Help us to not only look to you but to count on your to act. We submit to you Lord. We submit our desires and our cares to you. Lord give us your desires.