

Sermon: Justice, Forgiveness, and the Armour of Light

When Paul writes, “*Owe no one anything, except to love one another,*” he is not offering a gentle suggestion. He is laying down the foundation of Christian ethics. Love — real love, costly love, justice-shaped love — is the fulfilment of the law.

Everything God asks of us is gathered up into this one calling:

love your neighbour as yourself.

But Paul doesn’t stop there. He adds urgency: “*You know what time it is... now is the moment for you to wake from sleep.*” In other words: This is not the time for complacency. This is not the time for silence. This is not the time for drifting along.

The night is far gone. The day is near. So Paul says: **lay aside the works of darkness** — the habits, the attitudes, the behaviours that diminish others — and **put on the armour of light**. Put on Christ. Wear Christ. Let Christ shape the way you live.

And one of the ways Christ shapes us is in how we respond to wrongdoing — especially within the community of faith.

That’s where Matthew’s Gospel meets Paul’s letter. Jesus speaks directly into the messy reality of human relationships: “*If*

another member of the church sins against you...” He doesn’t say *if* conflict happens — he says *when*. Because Jesus knows us. He knows that even in the Church, even among people who love God, we hurt one another. We misunderstand. We fail. We sin. And Jesus gives us a process — not for punishment, but for **restoration**.

Go first to the person directly. Speak honestly. Seek reconciliation. If that fails, bring one or two others — not to gang up, but to support truth and healing. If that still fails, involve the wider community.

At every stage, the goal is the same: **to regain your brother or sister**. To restore what was broken. To heal what was wounded.

This is justice — but it is justice shaped by love. Justice that seeks the good of the other. Justice that refuses to humiliate. Justice that aims for reconciliation, not revenge.

And Jesus ends with a promise: “*Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.*” Christ is present in the difficult conversations. Christ is present in the courage to speak truth. Christ is present in the willingness to forgive. Christ

is present when we choose justice that heals rather than justice that harms.

So what does this mean for us? It means that **calling out injustice is part of Christian love**. Love does not ignore wrongdoing. Love does not pretend everything is fine. Love does not sweep harm under the carpet.

Love speaks. Love challenges. Love names what is wrong — not to destroy, but to rebuild.

But at the same time, **forgiveness is also part of Christian love**. Forgiveness is not weakness. Forgiveness is not pretending the hurt didn't matter. Forgiveness is not abandoning justice.

Forgiveness is the courage to say: "I will not let this wound define us." "I will not hold this against you forever." "I believe reconciliation is possible."

Justice without forgiveness becomes harsh. Forgiveness without justice becomes hollow. But together — justice and forgiveness — they become the armour of light Paul speaks of. They become the way we "put on Christ."

Because Christ himself held justice and forgiveness together. He confronted hypocrisy. He challenged oppression. He named sin. And yet he forgave. He restored. He welcomed. He healed.

So today, Paul and Jesus call us to a mature, courageous discipleship: To be people who **wake up**, who **put on Christ**, who **seek justice**, who **offer forgiveness**, who build communities where truth is spoken and grace is given.

This is not easy work. It is not comfortable work. But it is Kingdom work.

And when we do it — when we speak truth in love, when we forgive as we have been forgiven, when we seek justice that restores — then Christ's promise becomes real among us:

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

May we be people who carry the light of Christ into every relationship, every conflict, every conversation — people who seek justice with courage, and offer forgiveness with grace, so that the love Paul speaks of becomes the very shape of our lives. **Amen.**