

“BROKEN SIGNPOSTS” INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER 1 SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM

Introduction:

Have you ever had an experience in life where there was something that “ought” to have happened in a way that made sense but just simply did not? Perhaps it was an important question that you posed to someone close to you whose answer was off and out of character. It might be experiencing something that should have made you feel a certain way but instead had the opposite effect. In “Broken Signposts” N.T. Wright explores this very phenomenon. In it, he touches on the meaningful themes of justice, spirituality, relationships, beauty, freedom, truth, and power. These ideals bind us together as human beings and deep down we feel that they should play out in a way that makes sense of our world, yet so often they fail to do that. Wright contends that by looking through the Gospel of John and the way in which it illuminates these themes, that we can indeed use them to make sense of our world if only we would approach them in the way that God reveals their true meaning. We are excited to embrace this work as our sermon series study and even more thrilled that you will be joining us in that journey!

Chapter 1: Justice

In this chapter N.T. Wright uses the analogy of a crime novel to point to the ways in which we as humans contain a very deep-seated desire for justice to rightfully play out in our affairs. For anyone who has read a crime novel, they know the satisfaction of witnessing the fulfillment of justice when a crime has been committed. This no doubt relates to our own experiences of being wronged and our desire for that wrong to be set right. The fact of the matter is, in Wrights words our “instinct for justice runs very deep.” Yet while this instinct runs deep, we live in a world where justice does not always paly out in ways that seem right.

In John Chapter three, we see that Gods justice is at the core of this Gospel.

-Don't judge by appearances! Judge with proper and right judgment! (7:24)

-You are judging in merely human terms; I don't judge anyone. But if I do judge, my judgment is true, because I'm not a lone voice; I have on my side the father who sent me. (8:15-16)

In the Gospel of John is the story of an attempted stoning of a woman who allegedly, was caught in the act of adultery. (8:1-11) Jesus famously addressed the women's accusers saying, “**whichever of you is without sin should throw the first stone at her.**” (8:7)

In Chapter 12 of Johns Gospel, the real “adversary is identified as the “worlds ruler.” This power is behind the evil and death that has defaced and corrupted God's good world. In this chapter Jesus declares that “**Now comes the judgement of this world! Now this worlds**

ruler is going to be thrown out! And when I've been lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." (12:31-32)

John's gospel is a story that remembers the original goodness of creation and declares that God will set things right when God ushers in a new creation. It very intentionally reflects a God that made the world good once and will do so again! God will sort this world out in the end, and God will enact divine justice. And this is not a task that God will do alone, but as follower of Christ we are invited to participate in that activity.

We are resurrection people! And in the resurrection is the beginning of a new reality through a new creation. A new kind of power and authority is unleashed upon this world ruled by the unjust "adversary." Jesus' life marks the beginning of this new era and this new story for humanity, a story that we are still writing together!

Reflection Questions:

1. Are there times in your life that you have been wronged and wanted justice?
2. In thinking about that person experience, what would the world's justice have looked like? What would God's justice look like in that same situation?
3. In what ways has the world's justice gotten things wrong in our modern world?
4. If God's justice were fulfilled in our world now, what might that look like?