



ETHOS Conference 2017 – Justice & the Common Good
Saturday, 23 September 2017 | Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church

Lecture Synopses

Session 1: “Justice and the Common Good: A Biblical Perspective”

- Dr Philip Satterthwaite, Biblical Graduate School of Theology

When asked ‘What is the Bible all about?’, we tend to reach for phrases like ‘God’s salvation plan for humanity’ or ‘God’s goodness and mercy’. We could equally well answer with the simple word ‘justice’, for justice (along with injustice and judgment) is a major theme of both Old and New Testaments. The paper will begin with a survey of the biblical evidence. It will then compare biblical perspectives on justice with some more recent theories, and end by asking to what extent and in what ways the Bible encourages Christians to work for justice as part of their commitment to the common good.

Session 2: “Justice and Immigration”

- Dr Fong Choon Sam, Baptist Theological Seminary

This presentation will try to explain what the Bible teaches about how to relate to foreigners, and about seeking God's good for those impacted by global migration and changing immigration policies. Dr Fong Choon Sam will also offer some suggestions on what we can do as individuals and as a church that wants to be faithful to God's injunctions for living with those who are very different from us.

Session 3: “Justice and Creation Care”

- Dr Kwa Kiem-Kiok, East Asia School of Theology

Who dies first because of climate change? As we look around us today at the effects of climate change, we are aware that the ecological crisis is no longer a far off, nor a theoretical issue. Climate change is affecting all creatures great and small. More than just a concern for leftist tree-huggers, creation care is a concern for all Christians, not just to mitigate the effects of climate change and address the ecological crisis, but because it is part of God’s justice and shalom for the world.

Session 4: “A Critical Evaluation of the Nature, Origin and Basis of Human Rights in light of Individualism, Social Responsibility and the Common Good”

- Dr Richard Goetz, TCA College

What are human rights and where do they come from? How are human rights related to the common good? How can Christians support human rights efforts without compromising our biblical and theological distinctives? In this presentation we will provide a brief historical outline of the development of human rights, from its ancient origins and Christian development through its Enlightenment and Modern transformation to its contemporary expressions. We will then argue that the concept of human rights is grounded in the sacredness of human life as created by God in his image and as such ought to be actively supported by Christians and churches. However, when separated from the biblical worldview and grounded in a post-Enlightenment secular natural law, some human rights issues can become overly individualistic and lose sight of the common good, even harming the very societies within which they arise and for the sake of which they are defended.

The programme will also include pastoral responses and segments for discussion and interaction.