

Church Traditions – Lent series

29/30 March 2025

A wooden mannequin figure is shown from the back, holding a large, plush red heart. The mannequin is made of light-colored wood and has a simple, rounded head and torso. The heart is a vibrant red color and is held in front of the mannequin's chest. The background is a warm, brownish-gold gradient.

Social Justice Tradition: The Compassionate Life

(MICAHAH 6:6–8; MATTHEW 22:35–40; LUKE 10:29–37)

What is the Social Justice Tradition?

It is defined by a desire for us, Christians, to extend our life in Jesus Christ into our relationships with other people, with existing social structures and even with the earth itself.



I. Biblical Basis for the Social Justice Tradition

OT Foundations

God's Nature: His Image and Justice

Genesis 1:26-27 Humanity is created in the image of God (**Imago Dei**). All people have equal value, regardless of social and economic status, race, or nationality.

Justice is also fundamental to God's character.

Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne.

God's rule is based on fairness and what is morally right.

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Deuteronomy 10:18 declares that God executes justice for the orphan and the widow and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. God does not merely demand justice – He actively carries it out. He sets the example for people to follow.

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OT Laws and the Prophets (Micah 6:6-8)

Commands such as the fair treatment of workers (Deut. 24:14-15), the protection of foreigners (Lev. 19:33-34), and even the provisions for the poor through gleaning laws (Lev. 19:9-10), all reveal God's heart for justice.

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OT Laws and **the Prophets (Micah 6:6-8)**

6 “With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

MICAH 6:6-8

I. Biblical Basis for the Social Justice Tradition

Justice (*mishpat*) is not about punishing wrongdoing or the wrongdoer (“punitive justice”). It is also about bringing healing and restoration in the process (“restorative justice”).

Mercy (*hesed*) refers to the loving kindness, steadfast love and covenantal loyalty that God has for His people. It speaks of God’s unwavering compassion for His people.

Walking humbly with God means to maintain a deep personal relationship with Him, by obeying and trusting in Him.

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NT: Jesus and Social Justice

The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:35-40)

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37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

Matthew 22:35-40

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37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:35-40

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The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And **who is my neighbor?**”

Luke 10:29-37

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A **priest** happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a **Levite**, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a **Samaritan**, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he **took pity** on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Luke 10:29-37

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who **had mercy on him.**”

Jesus told him, “**Go and do likewise.**”

Luke 10:29-37

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Jesus Embodied Social Justice

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HE ELEVATED THE POOR, THE OUTCAST AND THE BROKEN

He touched lepers, healed the blind, provided for the poor and ate with sinners.

In a culture that viewed these groups as cursed, Jesus brought them into the center of God's love and healing.

HE CHALLENGED CORRUPT LEADERSHIP

He condemned religious leaders for burdening people with legalism, while neglecting justice and mercy (Matt. 23:23).

He overturned tables in the temple, protesting against exploitation of the poor.

HE BROKE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS

He spoke to Samaritan women, dined with tax collectors, and defended the adulterous woman from condemnation.

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The Goal of Biblical Social Justice:

A Vision of God's Complete Shalom
(True Peace)

II. *Advocates for the Social Justice Tradition*

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1. William Wilberforce



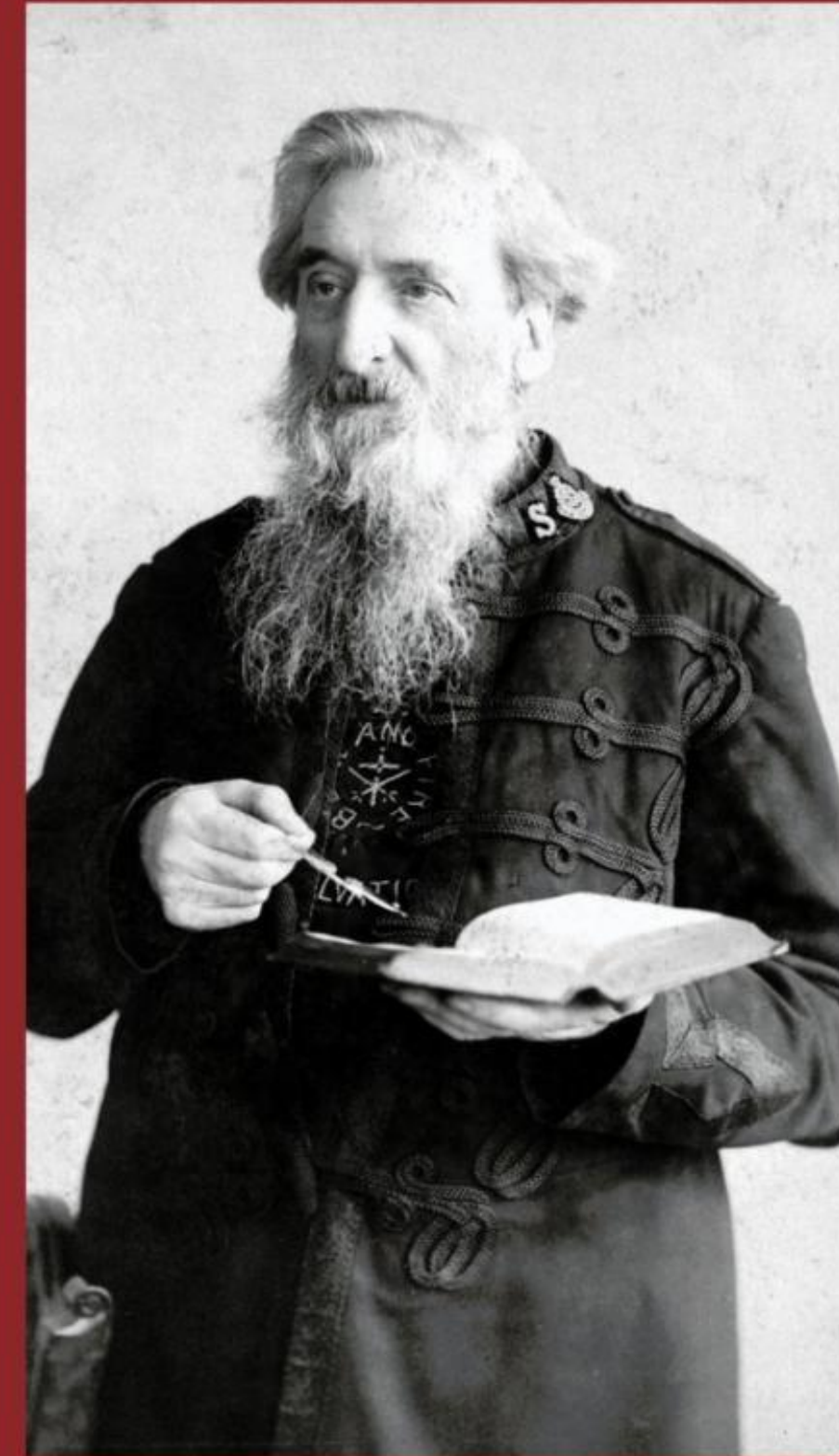
II. Advocates for the Social Justice Tradition

1. William Wilberforce
2. William Booth

“

The Salvation Army- what a strange name! What does it mean? Just what it says- a number of people joined together after the fashion of an army; and an army for the purpose of carrying Salvation through the land, neither more nor less than that.

William Booth

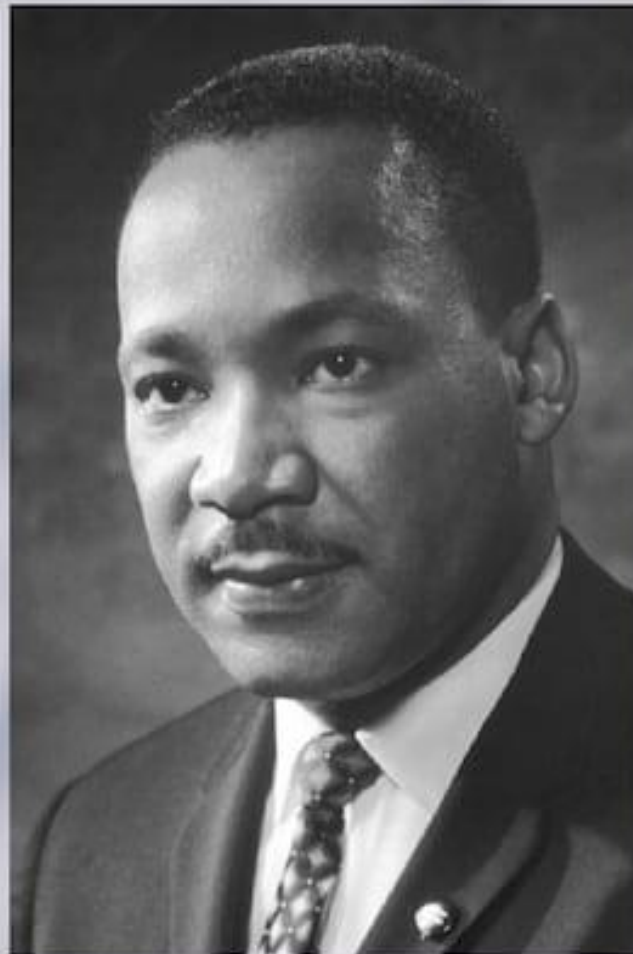


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1. William Wilberforce
2. William Booth
3. Martin Luther King Jr.

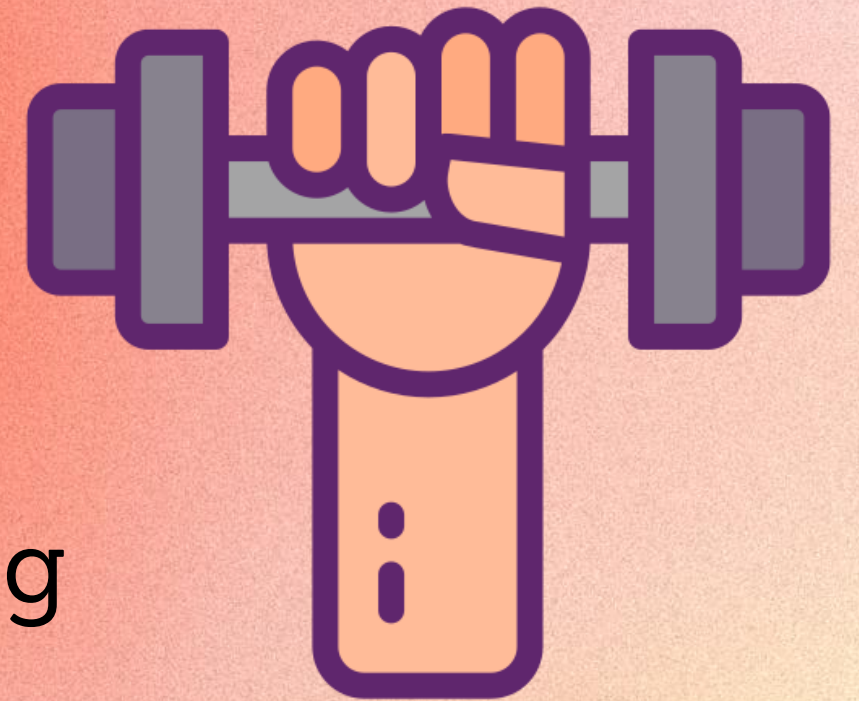
**"I HAVE A DREAM
THAT ONE DAY
THIS NATION WILL RISE UP
AND LIVE OUT
THE TRUE MEANING
OF IT'S CREED -
WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS
TO BE SELF-EVIDENT:
THAT ALL MEN
ARE CREATED EQUAL."**

Martin Luther King Jr.

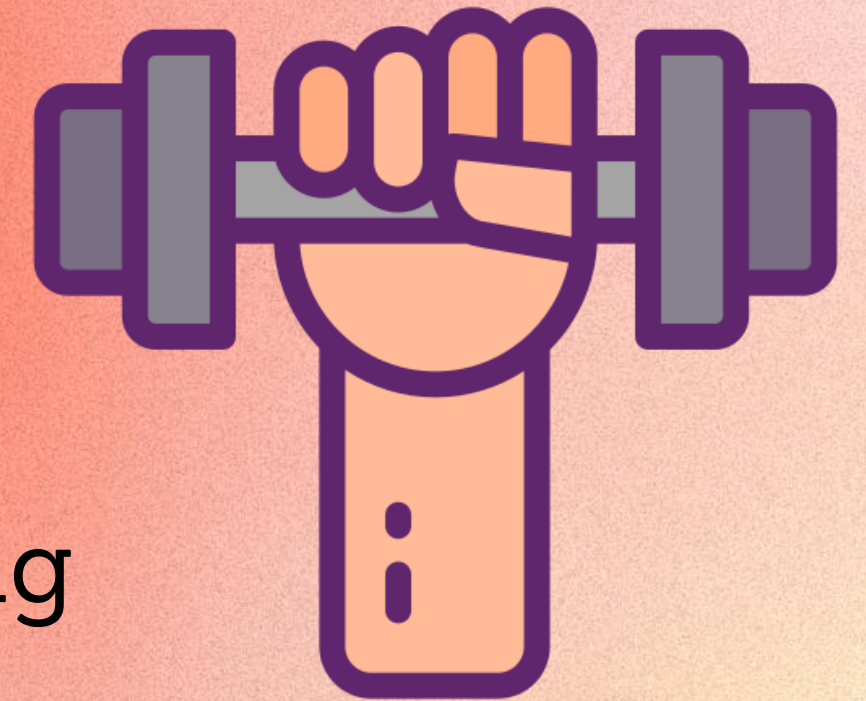


III. Strengths of the Social Justice Tradition

1. It Helps Society Live in the Right Way –
Through Right Relationships and Right Living



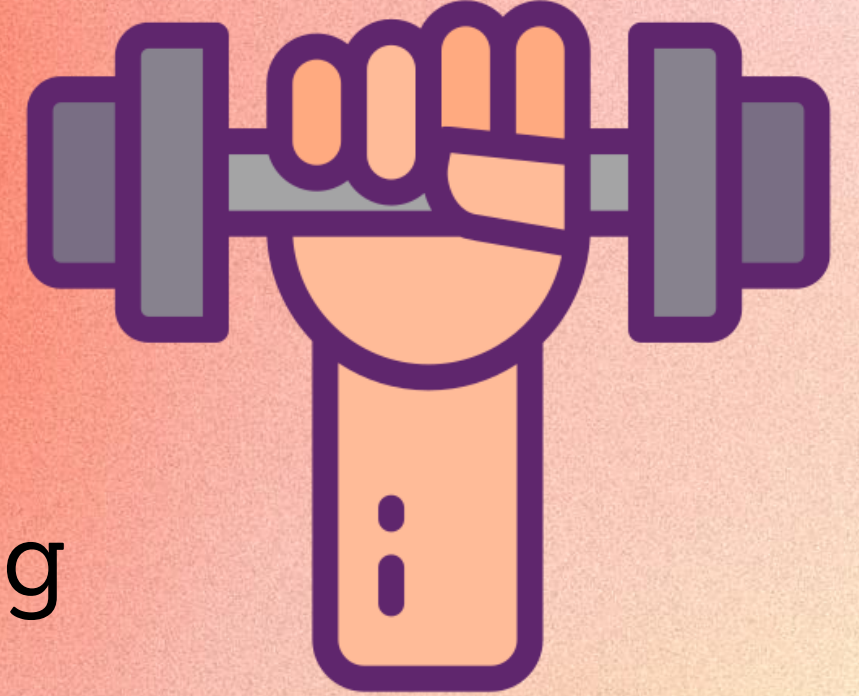
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2. It Reminds Us That the Church is for Everyone



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1. It Helps Society Live in the Right Way –
Through Right Relationships and Right Living
2. It Reminds Us That the Church is for Everyone
3. It Connects Our Personal Ethics with Society's Needs

IV. Potential Pitfalls of the Social Justice Tradition

1. It Can Become the Main Focus Instead of God



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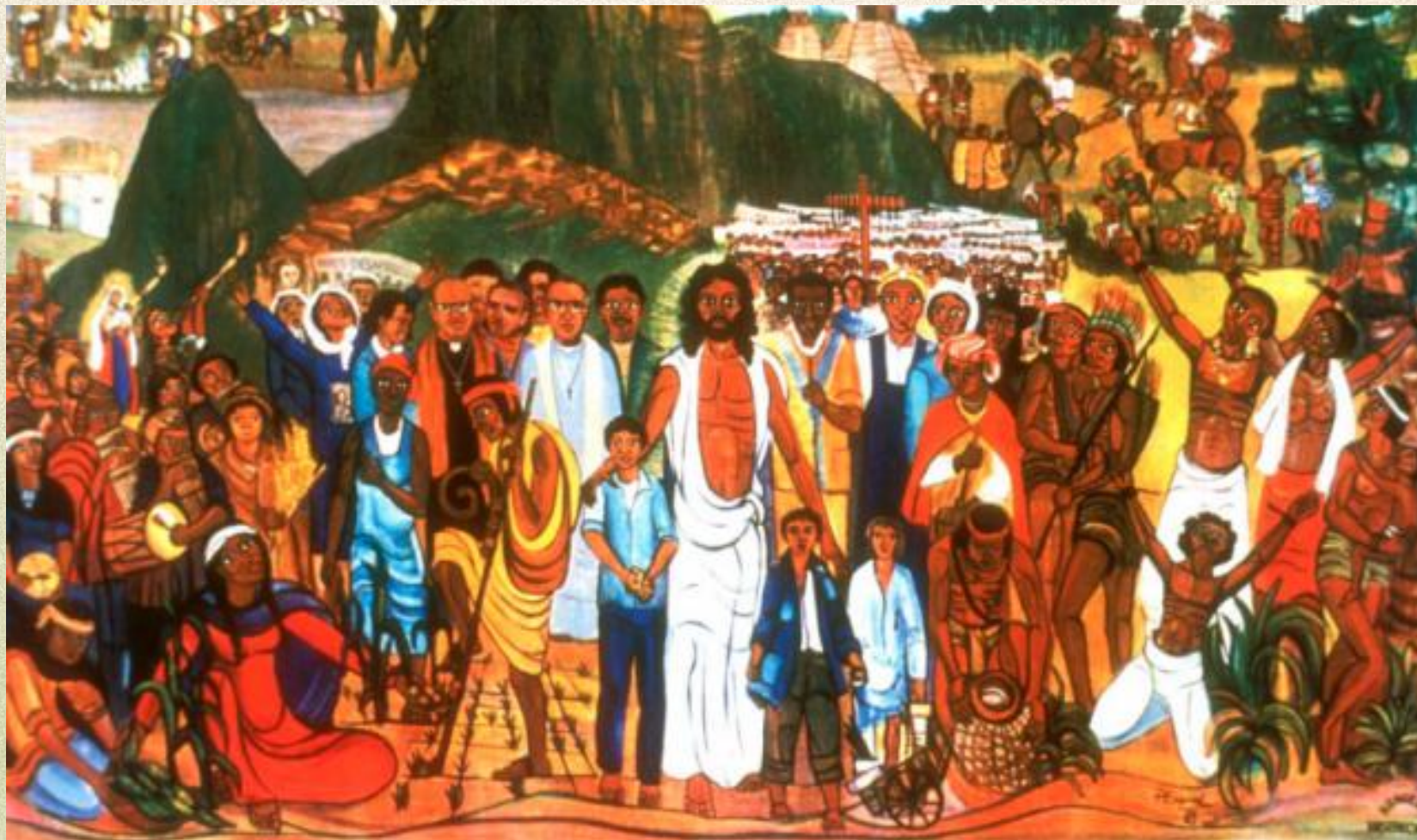
IV. Potential Pitfalls of the Social Justice Tradition

1. It Can Become the Main Focus Instead of God
2. It Can Lead to Judgmental Attitudes



IV. Potential Pitfalls of the Social Justice Tradition

1. It Can Become the Main Focus Instead of God
2. It Can Lead to Judgmental Attitudes
3. It Can Be Used for Political Agendas



Liberation Theology

V. Living Out: Embracing the Compassionate Life

Personal Renewal



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Personal Renewal

Reach Out to the Last, the Least and the Lost in Real and Tangible Ways

Last Least Lost

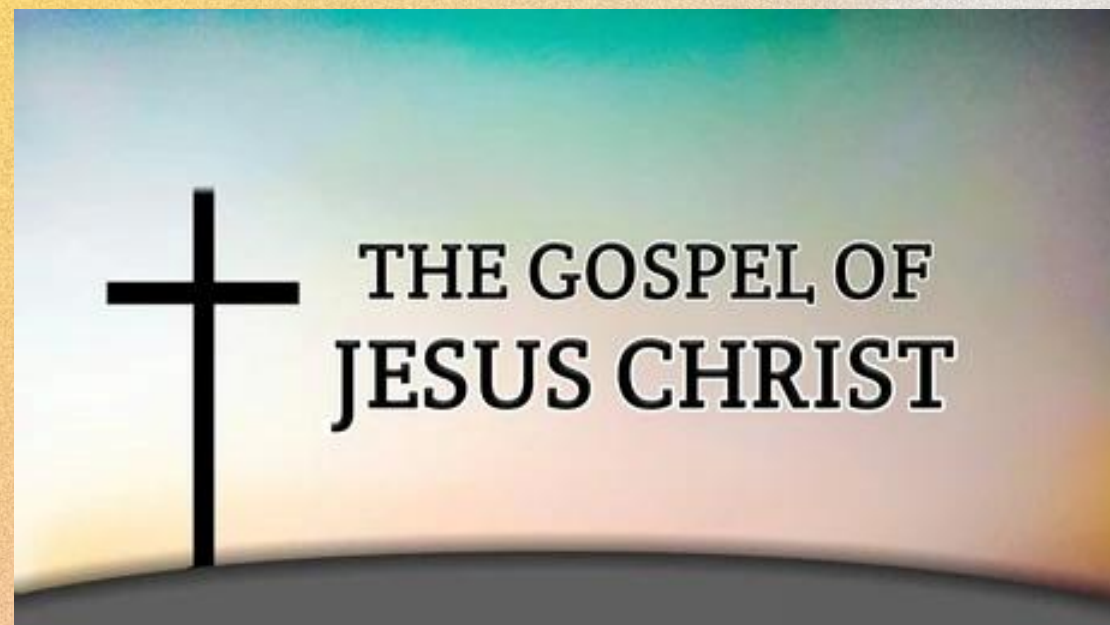


V. Living Out: Embracing the Compassionate Life

Personal Renewal

Reach Out to the Last, the Least and the Lost in Real and Tangible Ways

When Opportunity Arises, Share Your Testimony and the Gospel of Jesus



Conclusion

As we journey through Lent, let us commit ourselves

To give our time, to pray and to give generously for others, especially to the last, the least and the lost.

