



*Jolly Old St. Nicholas:
Meet the REAL Santa Claus!*
“St. Nicholas: A Champion for Justice”
Proverbs 21:3; Amos 5:21-24



First Time: December 13, 2015

First Place: Enola First Church of God

Introduction

Did you know that Santa Claus is concerned about cause of everyday justice—doing the right thing versus the wrong thing; at least among children he’s concerned about that. If you’re not sure about that, I’ll prove it and I’m going to get you to help me. Would you please humor me and join in on singing a little bit of that old Christmas children’s favorite, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town?* – “Oh you better watch out, you better not cry! You better not pout, I’m telling you why! Santa Claus is coming to town.”

Did you know that the real Santa Claus, St. Nicholas of Myra was a champion for everyday justice? What he did had nothing to do with figuring out who’s naughty or nice among the children of the world. Rather, he himself strived to live just and righteous life before God even to the extent that on some occasions, he confronted some serious injustices that were happening in his sphere of influence. We’re going to look briefly at what this champion for justice did. But before we do that, let’s talk a little bit about everyday justice from the Scriptures.

1) The Call for Everyday Justice in Scripture

-First of all, let me say that many times we as conservative, evangelical Christians are not comfortable with championing the cause of justice due to the Social Gospel Movement of the 1800’s. At that time, more emphasis was being placed on doing good works rather than evangelism. To this day, we as evangelicals are wary of going down that same path.

-But the Bible does say that as God's people, we are "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." That's being a champion for justice. And if we as Christians don't act justly, don't love mercy and refuse to walk humbly with our God, people are going to see right through us when we do make efforts in evangelism and all of our labors will be utterly worthless. Let's look at some Scriptures:

Proverbs 21:3

-Obviously, the people living when the Book of Proverbs was written were allowing their sacrifices and their offerings to be a substitute for righteous living. In other words, their thinking was "If we give our sacrifices, then we can go out and run around and do whatever in the dickens we want!"

-Translated in the church today, that would be the same as thinking, "As long as I plop my envelope into the plate, I'm now covered and can be careless. It doesn't matter if I act like a jerk, de-value people, and let it be known that I'm better than everyone else.

-God prefers our obedience, doing what is right and just over our sacrifices and offerings.

Amos 5:21-24

-Although Amos' message is directed towards many different people groups living at that time, his primary focus is Israel which at that time was the northern Kingdom of God's people.

-Clearly, the people were not acting with everyday justice like God's people should.

-They were selling poor as slaves

-Exploiting the poor

-Taking illegal collateral for loans

-To boot, they were involved in sexual sins and idolatry.

21- He says, "I hate, I despise your religious feasts!"

And these feasts God is referring to are those high and holy days, that is, the big deals!

-Can you imagine today if we were to plan several grand events like a Christmas Eve Service, Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunrise, Service of Remembrance on

Memorial Day, Back to Church Sunday, a grand magnificent revival series and God would say, "I hate them all!" That's what's going on here. Why? Because of religious hypocrisy – God's people getting all fired up in worship but ignoring everyday justice in their lives!

v. 22- Burnt offerings – smoke going up to God in homage to make atonement for sin – Today: Coming here to the prayer rail asking God to forgive us our sins but having no intentions to actually change our ways.

-Grain offerings – Returning to God a part of the creation upon which they were dependent – Today: Taking up the offering.

-Fellowship offering – Take part of the animal offered on the altar and share it with the priests, with each other in symbolizing their devotion to God and fellowship with one another. Today: Having the Lord's Supper and afterwards gathering for a Meet 'n Mingle Luncheon!

23 -God says, "I don't want to hear your music no matter how good it is!" Maybe our best music would be bringing back Chris Hicks and Evidence Worship Band, and while we're at it we get the Newsboys in here along with the Gaither Homecoming gang.

-These Old Testament people were performing their best music and yet God said, "I can't stand it!"

24 – So what did God want them to do? God wanted them to have a relentless commitment to everyday justice and righteousness; a passion that would roll on like an ever-flowing river.

-So to put it all together, we can come in here with Chris Hicks, the Newsboys and the Gaithers for a "Woo-woo-woo" experience, have people come to the prayer rail, put our offering envelopes in the plate, have the Lord's Supper and later go downstairs for a Meet 'n Mingle Luncheon, but if we go out of here and act like a bunch of JERKS taking advantage of people and treating them like their worthless, you better believe that God is going to look at that and say, "I can't stand any of it!"

Let me tell you this: If that is what's going on in any of our lives, God can't stand it. What does He want from

us?

-God wants us to have a relentless commitment to everyday justice and righteousness; a passion that would roll on like an ever-flowing river.

-Later we will look at how we can do that. For now, let's look at how St. Nicholas demonstrated justice and righteousness in his life.

2) The Chronicles of Justice in the Life of Nicholas

Nicholas was born into a wealthy Christian home in the southern part of what is now Turkey and grew up to be a passionate follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

-When he was 18 years old, both of his parents died. But that didn't stop him from being a passionate follower of Jesus. Rather, he went on to serve God as a Bishop in the Church at Myra.

-There are stories of Nicholas' as Bishop of Myra how he was a champion for justice.

-Around 330 A.D., a group of military ships were forced to land at the port in Myra. The commanding officers gave the troops permission to fan out through the area to find food and entertainment. Some local hooligans decided to take advantage of this situation. They dressed up like soldiers and went out looting and stealing things. These hooligans were arrested, but town people still believed that the soldiers who landed were doing all of these shenanigans. So, a riot broke out. Someone called for Bishop Nicholas. When he came on the scene, he helped quiet the people who were rioting and brought about peace between the military people and the locals.

-But, there was still trouble looming. The local governor was about to execute three innocent men and the charges were impersonating the Roman soldiers and looting. But again, these men were innocent of this.

-The story goes that Nicholas forced his way through the crowd where the execution was to take place and yanked the sword away from the executioner. He untied the hands of the innocent men and set them free. At this point in history, a bishop had the authority to do

this!

-The last thing that Nicholas had to do was confront the governor. You see, the governor who ordered the execution of these three men was given a bribe of 200 pieces of gold for doing so. Nicholas went to the governor, allegedly broke down the door and told the governor that he was a “thief” and an “enemy of God.” He told him that he was “sacrilegious, blood thirsty and unjust.”

-The governor wilted under Nicholas’ rebuke. He fell to his knees and asked for forgiveness!

-The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

3) **The Christian’s Call to Everyday Justice**

a) **Luke 6:31**

Do you know what we call that? It’s the Golden Rule! What does it mean? It simply means think about how you would like to someone else treat you, and just treat others that way?

-Do you want other people to speak to you in a way that is encouraging and builds you up or with condescending words that tear you down? Once you’ve figured out how you want to be treated, then treat other people that way.

-Do you want other people to be honest and truthful with you or manipulative? Do the same.

-The Golden Rule of friendship is to listen to others as you would have them listen to you.

The list goes on.

b) **Romans 13:7**

-This passage applies primarily to our treatment of governing authorities placed over us.

-If you owe someone something or if they deserve something, give it to them!

-If someone does a good job on something, tell them about it.

c) **James 5:4-5**

A faithful Christian employer will treat his workers right; and a faithful Christian employee will do the

very best work possible to earn the wages for which he has agreed to work.

d) **James 1:27**

-Also, like St. Nicholas' example, speak up when you see injustice!

-Speak up for the unborn.

-When people groups are being taken care of. One example of this is the Navajo people.

-Those of you in school – The research has shown that the number one thing that helps cut down on bullying is when students see someone being bullied if they go to the bully and say, "Stop it." That works.

- The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

4) The Connection Between Christmas and Everyday Justice

a) **Romans 8:3-4**

– Can you imagine what it was like in the days that the prophets like Amos prophesied and the law said, "Act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" but it didn't do anything to help you.

-That's like sending someone into a room full of Christmas cookies and hanging a sign up that says, "You must lose weight and if you mess up and eat one of these cookies, no one will ever speak to you again" And by the way, there's no help to help you curb your appetite so you won't want to touch them.

-But what happened on Christmas Day? God came into the world in the Person of Jesus Christ, Therefore, the requirement of fulfilling God's Law has been fulfilled in us. He paid the price for us. Jesus took care of everything on our behalf to make us right with God!

-And, now we walk according to the Spirit which enables us to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

-We can do it--and all because of Christmas Day.

Closing

-So as far as I'm concerned, you can have your legendary Santa Claus who's making list and checking it twice gonna find out who's naughty and nice.

-I like the example given to us by the REAL St. Nicholas, a servant of God who in Jesus' Name was a champion for justice.

-So after his example but more importantly by the command of Scripture, let us "Act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with our God."

-And because of Jesus coming into the world on Christmas Day and later sending the Holy Spirit to live in us, we can do it. Each one of us has the ability to be a Champion for Justice.