

The Cost of Justice – Communion, 2010

- *Cold, moonlit evening – March 5, 1770 – shortly before 9:00 pm
- *Streets of Boston, MA covered with a foot of snow
- *A lone British sentry was posted in front of the Customs House
- *Soldier was being taunted by a small band of men and boys
- *Suddenly the courthouse bell rang forth, a signal usually reserved for a fire somewhere. Almost at once a crowd of several hundred began to gather around the Customs House
- *The lone British guard is reinforced by 8 British soldiers with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets.
- *Some in the crowd begin to throw snow and ice balls at the soldiers. Others hit the soldiers with stones. One clubs a soldier down to the ground with a piece of wood.
- *Suddenly, a gunshot is heard. Then more guns shots. When the smoke clears, 5 Americans lay dead.
- *This event is remembered in history books as the Boston Massacre.
- *The following day, a young lawyer named John is asked to defend the British soldiers and their captain. No one else will take the case, he is told.
- *John hesitates. His wife, Abigail, is pregnant. He fears for the safety of his family and for his law practice. But as he studies the scene, he becomes convinced that these soldiers were not guilty of the crime that they accused of. It was the crowd that had incited the situation. The soldiers were only protecting themselves from harm. The soldiers had defended themselves. So John agrees to take the case.
- *John's fears are realized. His practice is almost immediately cut in half. He would write in his diary that this was the most exhausting case that he ever took.
- *There were 2 trials. In the 1st, John defended the Captain. Did the captain give an order to fire? This is the question that must be answered. In the 2nd, John defends the soldiers. Did they kill innocent people in a premeditated manner?
- *the trials went on for several months. The juries deliberated for hours. The British Captain was acquitted of all charges. 6 of the 8 British soldiers were also acquitted. 2 of the British soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter. Their sentence was that their thumbs were to be branded. They were given a lighter sentence because of the mitigating circumstances, the incitement of the crowd.
- *Boston citizens were outraged at these decisions. And they, of course, took out their venom on John because the British soldiers were quickly assigned to other duties in other locations. John was the subject of loathsome editorials in the Boston Gazette. John was ridiculed in the streets every time he left his home.

John's law practice suffered. But John knew in his heart that justice had been done. He had been willing to identify with the enemy because he wanted justice for them above everything else.

*In the long run of his life, this trial did not hurt John. In fact, it could be argued that this trial would ultimately raise his estimation in the eyes of the American people. No one would ever doubt John's integrity – not when he became one of the chief proponents of the Declaration of Independence and a prominent signer of it, not when he was chosen by George Washington to be the 1st Vice President of our country, not when he was elected to be the 2nd President of the U.S.

*People knew that John Adams was a man of integrity. He was a man who loved justice. They knew this beyond a shadow of a doubt because John Adams was willing to personally suffer so that those whom he considered to be innocent people would not suffer by mob rule even though they were his enemies.

*The Bible presents God as a Just God. We can be thankful for God's justice for without it, we wouldn't have a sense of justice ourselves. We have been created in the image and likeness of God. Part of that image that we all carry is an inner sense of justice. We all detect if something isn't fair and we react against it. But our justice can be perverted because we are sinful beings. Sometimes, we tolerate injustice in ourselves and outside situations if it is in our best interests. A politician will sometimes rig unfair elections in order to gain an office. An athlete will sometimes bend the rules in order to win. A person will sometimes cheat on his tax returns to pay fewer taxes.

God, unlike us, is perfect in his justice. He always does with is right and fair. Even when it hurts him personally, he is still just.

*There is no better illustration of the perfect justice of God than the occasion that brings us together this morning. For as we participate in the elements of this communion table, we need to remember that they represent the perfect justice of God, justice that cost God as great deal personally. For the Lord Jesus Christ was sent to this earth in part to satisfy the justice of God

*As sin entered the human race, every human being incurred a debt against God that he or she could never pay. As created beings who are fully dependent upon our creator, we all owe to God absolute allegiance and obedience. When we fail in that duty, we incur a debt on our account with God. A God who is perfect in justice and righteousness cannot tolerate such debts. But the best that we can do is to fully obey God and that is just what we owe God anyway. How can we make up any debt owed because of our sin? Sin places us in an impossible situation with God's just character.

*Happily, God has provided what we could never do for ourselves. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to pay the debt that we all owe. He came to deliver us from the guilt of our sin.

*Ironically, part of Christ's payment forced him to be subjected to injustice and mob rule. The mock trial of the Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest example of human injustice that has ever occurred. Every aspect of that trial was a complete sham. Jesus Christ was completely innocent – he was the only perfect human being who ever walked the face of this earth. Yet he was condemned to be executed as a common criminal.

*The arrest of Jesus was illegal because he was arrested before he was charged with any crime. They arrested Jesus and then took his case to the Sanhedrin to determine what charges to accuse him of.

*According to Jewish law, it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to consider a capital offense case during a feast season, yet they met and considered Jesus case during the time of the Passover feast.

*It was also illegal for the council to make a judgment during the night, after the sun had set. Yet the entire trial of Jesus took place during the darkness of the night.

*According to Jewish law, any condemnation of death requires the unanimous testimony of at least 2 agreeing witnesses yet credible witnesses against Jesus could not be found.

*The high priest and the president of the Sanhedrin were required by law to be neutral arbitrators or moderators. Yet in frustration, Caiaphas the high priest took upon himself the role of the prosecutor and asked leading questions of Jesus that would never have been allowed in a court of law.

*When Jesus admitted to his claim of being the Messiah, Caiaphas leaped to the verdict himself. *He has committed blasphemy.* He had no legal authority to do this.

*The law required a 24 hour waiting period between the sentence and the execution in a capital offense. Jesus was hanging on the cross within a few hour of his conviction.

*The physical abuses that Jesus suffered in his beatings and floggings were far beyond what was allowed by the law.

*Every single aspect of the arrest, trial and execution of the Lord Jesus Christ was unjust. Yet in his death, the Lord Jesus Christ satisfied the just requirements of God's character. For all of those injustices that he suffered were what he was paying for on the cross of Calvary. Jesus Christ came to this earth to satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God. And he paid that debt in full to satisfy what the just character of God demanded.

*How thankful we can be that the Lord Jesus Christ paid the debt of our sins. If we have received God's gift of forgiveness, we stand before God cleansed, clothed in the very righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

*That's why we refer to this time as the celebration of the Lord's Table. For this should really be a time of celebration for us. We celebrate our position in God's family. We celebrate the cleansing that we have received from our sins. We celebrate the fact that we stand justified before a perfectly just and righteous God. If you have personally received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior this morning and you are confident

of your position as a member of God's family, we invite you to celebrate with us in remembering Christ's sacrifice for our sins.