

I used to think of righteousness as the objective and stoic judge on a pedestal with a gavel, perhaps with a blindfold, judging legal cases according to the letter of the law. But the Bible presents the image of a leader pursuing righteousness that includes love, mercy, and compassion.

The psalmist claims, "The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The LORD protects the unwary [i.e., the vulnerable]; when I was brought low, he saved me" (Ps 116:5–6 NIV). And when Jesus introduces the Beatitudes, he probably has the same blessed people in mind who are both hungering for righteousness (Matt 5:6) and showing mercy and compassion (Matt 5:7).

We only need to look on social media to see people screaming about how horrible and immoral "those people" are and how they should be shunned and punished, all in the name of justice. There is often no love, charity, or compassion in these comments. There is judgement, rage, and malice masquerading as "righteousness." Yet the Apostle Paul - also passionate about justice - who says to the Philippians "let your gentleness be known to everyone" (Phil.4:5). The Greek word for "gentleness", *Epiekes* - also means "kindness" or "generous patience".

**MEDITATE & PRAY:** Lord, Jesus, may I be transformed into your likeness - full of compassion to all, generous and kind in patience and grace. Forgive me for my cold headedness, impatience, and anger. Thank you for your mercy and grace.

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