



2021 Justice and Advocacy Week: Introduction

Aligning our lives to the mission of Christ

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I remember going to a Scripture Union camp at the end of Year 12, as a very enthusiastic young person, who had decided to follow Jesus two years prior. In this camp we explored large themes of the Bible, as well as participated in workshops on ethical shopping, and did a city exposure walk with Urban Seed (back in the day).

It was during this camp where I heard and experienced for the first time that following Jesus didn't mean that we are called to be 'nice', but rather it meant that our everyday choices – what we bought, what we consumed, and who we hung out with, was intrinsically linked to God's heart and mission for the poor and marginalised to experience flourishing and wholeness.

I hadn't even thought about my consumption habits contributing towards whether someone was experiencing poverty on the other side of the world. The word 'justice' wasn't in my Christian vocabulary. For some reason in the first two years of my walk with Jesus, I had been concerned with going to heaven, rather than seeing heaven come here to earth.

And so, I've tried to sit with what Jesus sensed his mission to be about. He describes his mandate early on in his ministry:

We read in Luke 4:14-21:

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."^[a]

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."



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I am continually challenged each time I read this passage. We see in the stories of Jesus' life the way that He embodied this manifesto. We saw that He was empowered by the Spirit, motivated by the Spirit's heart for the poor, and He sought to make daily choices to treat marginalised people with dignity, and challenge the systems that continued to oppress them.

I sit in un-comfortability, as a follower of Christ, and I ask myself, does my life and mission reflect His life and mission? Does my heart break for the poor and oppressed? Are my actions and choices concerned with the poor, the sick, those living with disabilities, those in prison, and the oppressed? What actions am I taking that contribute towards dismantling systems that oppress, and what actions contribute to systems that encourage people to flourish? These are difficult questions, but I think these are integral questions, and reflect that our deep desire is to be aligned with the purposes, mission, and heartbeat of Christ.

For reflection:

- How have you embodied Jesus' manifesto as your own?
- What barriers or challenges might there be for you as a follower of Jesus to live out this manifesto?
- How can we become more sensitive to the pain and plight of those in need and marginalised?

Let's commit to being aligned with Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, and to take action for the poor and marginalised in our world.

Short bio:

Charlene Delos Santos is the Co-director of Surrender Co. an organisation that calls followers of Jesus to the margins. She is also the BUV's Multicultural 2nd Generation Coordinator.