

Banquet Speaker—Saturday, November 14, 2015 (1.0 CEU)

Lisa Sharon Harper

"Pursuing Shalom: Serving Our Neighbors Locally and Globally"

Abstract: Grounded in Genesis 1 and manifest in Matthew 25:31-end, this session will explore the biblical concept of shalom and its implications for the social worker and the Christian as we engage the world with justice and compassion. Lisa Sharon Harper will connect the biblical text with the challenges encountered by social workers on a daily basis: hunger, thirst, sickness, immigration, prison, and abject poverty. Explore the implications of the call to “righteousness” on local and global engagement with those Jesus calls “the least of these.”

Outline: Topics to be addressed and timeline within the 45 minute presentation.

- I. The Biblical Concept of Shalom: Overview
 - a. Three words in Genesis 1
 - i. *tov' mehode* (very good)
 - ii. *tselem* (image)
 - iii. *radah* (dominion)
 - b. Implications
 - i. To be human is to be made in the image of God.
 - ii. There is a direct connection between being made in the image of God and the call to “exercise dominion.”
 - iii. To diminish the capacity of people to exercise dominion, through poverty or oppression, is to diminish the image of God on earth.
 - iv. Shalom requires the protection and service of the vulnerable.
- II. Matthew 25 Context
 - a. Matthew 23:27-32. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and Scribes for corrupt leadership
 - i. Whitewashed tombs
 - ii. Brood of vipers
 - b. Jesus exits the temple and gathers his disciples on Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple
- III. Matthew 25: 31-end
 - a. V. 32 “nations” = people groups
 - b. Two options for how to read vs. 32
 - i. He will separate people groups from each other
 - ii. He will separate out people from their groups creating two new groups
 - c. Vs. 34 “blessed” = to speak well of

- d. Vs. 34 “come” = invitation to intimacy
 - e. Word study
 - i. Hungry
 - ii. Thirsty
 - iii. Stranger
 - iv. Naked
 - v. Sick
 - vi. Prison
 - f. V. 37 “Righteous” = ones of equitable action and character
 - g. Equity vs. Equality
 - h. Inequity statistics by field of interest
 - i. What would it look like to seek equity? To level the playing fields
 - j. Brainstorm in Twos
 - k. Sharing (if there’s time)
 - l. V. 40. Jesus identifies with the marginalized and vulnerable
 - m. V. 41-end. This is central to our faith.
 - i. Jesus is telling his disciples that their Jewish identity is not what they should rely on to be on the right. Rather, it is the question of whether or not they will be counted among the “ones of equitable action and character.”
 - ii. How can we say we are a follower of Jesus—that we have the Holy Spirit in us—that we are citizens in the Kingdom of God, and not do as the Holy Spirit does—Psalm 146:7-9?
- IV. How do we seek shalom?
- a. Be ones of equitable action and character
 - b. This is how we partner with God to restore “tov’ mehode” to creation!
 - c. To seek equity is to increase capacity of all people to exercise Godly dominion and to fan the flame of the image of God on earth.

Learning Objectives: *As a result of this presentation participants will be able to:*

- Describe to biblical concept of shalom
- Summarize how the Christian faith with call to seek systemic equity
- Articulate how the Matthew 25 text connects with the challenges encountered by social workers every day

Primary Audience: Social workers and related professionals; social work students; human services professionals; clergy

Content Level: Basic/Intermediate

Number of Continuing Education Contact Hours: 1.0

Bio Information: Lisa Sharon Harper is currently Sojourners Senior Director of Mobilizing. Ms. Harper previously served as the founding executive director of New York Faith & Justice. In that capacity she helped establish Faith Leaders for Environmental Justice, a city-wide collaborative effort of faith leaders committed to leveraging the power of their constituencies and their moral authority in partnership with communities bearing the weight of environmental injustice. She also organized faith leaders to speak out for immigration reform and organized the South Bronx Conversations for Change, a dialogue-to-change project between police and the community.

Her writing has been featured in *The National Civic Review*, *God's Politics* blog, *The Huffington Post*, *Relevant Magazine*, *Patheos.com*, *Urban Faith*, and *Prism* where she has written extensively on tax reform, comprehensive immigration reform, health care reform, poverty, racial and gender justice, and transformational civic engagement.

Ms. Harper's faith-rooted approach to advocacy and organizing has activated people of faith across the U.S. and around the world to address structural and political injustice as an outward demonstration of their personal faith.

Having earned her master's degree in Human Rights from Columbia University in New York City, Ms. Harper's 2011 book, *Left, Right & Christ: Evangelical Faith in Politics*, was co-written with D.C. Innes (an evangelical Republican who is also a Tea-Partier). Harper and Innes explore their philosophies of government and business as well as six major issues the next generations of evangelicals must wrestle with to be faithful witnesses in the public square. (October 2011, Russell Media)

Ms. Harper's first book, *Evangelical Does Not Equal Republican...or Democrat* (October 2008, The New Press) offers a power-packed look at the roots of evangelical faith, how Evangelicals strayed so far from those roots, and what is bringing them back.

Ms. Harper co-founded and co-directed the *Envision 2008: The Gospel, Politics, and the Future* conference on the campus of Princeton University (June 2008) and co-chaired the *Envision 2011: Caring for the Community of Creation: Environmental Justice, Climate Change, and Prophetic Witness* symposium in New York City (June 2011). She was the recipient of Sojourners' inaugural Organizers Award and the Harlem "Sisters of Wisdom" Award. She was celebrated on Rick Warren's website *Purposedriven.com* as one of the site's inaugural seven "Take Action Heroes," was named "#5 of the Top 13 Women to Watch in 2012" by the Center for American Progress, was awarded the 2013 Faith and Justice Leadership Award by the National Black Women's Roundtable, was recently awarded the National Council of La Raza Capital Award for Public Service for her participation as a core faster in the 2013 #Fast4Families initiative for immigration reform and was recently recognized as one of "50 Powerful Women Religious Leaders to Celebrate on International Women's Day" by the Huffington Post.

Ms. Harper is currently in the ordination process with the Evangelical Covenant Church.