

**Dorset South and West Written Service – Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021**  
**‘Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly’ by Revd John Yarrien**

**Call to Worship:**

Loving God, we have come to worship you.

**Help us to remember that you are here with us, May we pray to you in faith, sing your praise with gratitude, and listen to your word with eagerness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Prayer of Praise:**

**We praise you, O God**, the maker of the universe, by whose wisdom we are created and sustained.

**We praise you, O God**, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose love we are redeemed and forgiven.

**We praise you, O God**, the source of all holiness, by whose Spirit we are made whole and brought to perfection.

**We praise you, O God**, Source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,  
**as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession:**

Let us confess our sins to God.

For our foolishness and our thoughtless use of the gifts of your creation,  
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

For our neglect of you, and our failure to care for others,  
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

For our selfishness in prayer and our carelessness in worship,  
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

**Silence**

Here is good news for all who put their trust in Christ. Jesus says: ‘Your sins are forgiven.’

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Reading: Micah 6: 6 – 8:**

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup> Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup> He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly<sup>[a]</sup> with your God.

**Sermon**

Once upon a time a gardener was visiting his allotment with a packet of pumpkin seeds.

There he spread the pumpkin seeds all over, and as he did, he said –

**“Grow Pumpkins Grow”**

**“Grow into the best pumpkins you can be”**

At the centre of the pumpkin patch, the seeds, in the full light of the sun, began to grow.

They grew into magnificent plants, tall and lush, and they opened their broad pumpkin leaves to the light of the sun.

In the fullness of time the large orange pumpkins began to form, and they became proud that they would win first prize in the village show – to the delight of the gardener. **We'll show you what a pumpkin can be, they said.** In another patch, a small group of plants was talking deeply. That lot might get first prize at the show, they said, but who is going to see that. Wouldn't it be much better to grow large and round and become lanterns. That way we will shine a really bright light on the world. Through us everyone will see the essential pumpkinness of pumpkins.

In a slightly shadier part of the allotment, the plants were not so magnificent. But they were still determined to please the gardener. They formed a small committee, yes these were Methodist Pumpkins. And they talked about what they would do. If we try to compete with those magnificent pumpkins over there they will steal our glory. Much better we have our own idea. Now it's fair to say that pumpkins are made for serving. If we put all our energy into growth, soon we will have enough seed to propagate the whole allotment patch. So they grew up towards to the light. Determined that when all the glories of the other pumpkins had passed away they would form hundreds of little pumpkin plants. The best ever sort of pumpkin to please the gardener.

Then the gardener returned and looked at the allotment. Look at us said the prize winning pumpkins, we are surely top prize winning pumpkins. You can see what pumpkins should be through us. Ahuum, interrupted the lantern pumpkins. All very good being shiny and polished on the outside, but it's what's inside that counts, at least we have room inside for a light to shine out on dark days. Oh for goodness sake, said the soup pumpkins. You are all for show and status, what's the point of a pumpkin unless you can be useful. We may not be grand, but at least we are feeding the hungry. All well and good, said the seed pumpkins – but where will you all be in 10 years' time. You haven't looked ahead with your pumpkin business plan for sustainable growth.

The gardener looked lovingly and sadly at his pumpkins. And shook his head. You foolish pumpkins, he said, you are all so concerned about yourselves, and your essential pumpkinness, when I said grow, pumpkins, grow – it wasn't just for a harvest of pumpkins, it was so you could be transformed into a carriage, fit for a prince.

Now it's very unwise to try to explain parables. Jesus didn't do that very often. He told the parables, and allowed you to find the meaning and how it spoke to you. So I simply draw your attention to one feature of the story.

They each wanted to grow and each group made a decision on how they wanted to grow. There is a question that resonates for us all - **How will you choose to live your life from this moment forward?** The Israelites in the time of Micah had to ask themselves the same question. How will I live my life, how we will live our corporate lives together.

Now you can answer that question in a number of different ways. One of the ways is to adopt a set of principles to live by – a kind of rule of life. Micah's words are a kind of rule of life. To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. It's simple, it's easy to remember. It's a formula you can pull back to at any given moment. **To do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.**

That rule of life goes back nearly 3000 years. What does it mean to do Justice?

The emphasis here is to ACTION. We're not asked to like justice, we're not asked to find justice, we are asked to DO justice. God wants people who will do justice. Jesus told a parable about two sons who were

asked by their father to work in the vineyard. One said yes of course I will and he did. The other said no I am not doing that today. Then he changed his mind and he went and worked – Jesus said which one did his father’s will - not the one who talked about it – but the one who went, albeit reluctantly and did it. God wants people who do justice, who practice justice in every moment of their lives. That’s no easy business – it’s messy and it’s complicated and it requires a long term commitment.

Two girls were interested in fair trade when it was in its infancy and they saw there was an issue of justice. They wanted to do something about it. So they convinced their school they could do a project relating to it. They wrote to every supermarket to ask what fair trade goods they had on sale. This was early on in the movement and very few goods were in the supermarkets. No letters came back. After a couple of weeks they wrote to the newspaper, they asked what fair trade products were on sale, and they explained what fair trade was, and that they had no responses. “We wonder if it is because the supermarkets are ashamed of their policies, yours sincerely” - within two days a whole lot of letters came back. **God wants people of every age to DO JUSTICE.**

If we’re to do Justice, we have to love mercy. Different translations – love mercy, to love kindness and sometimes to love goodness. If you translate it literally it would say to LOVE LOVE. One kind of love for a partner or a child or a neighbour. The other is the word used for God’s love. The HESEPTH love of God. Strong, the faithful, the ever present love of God, by which God is described. And the basic principle here is that you learn to love that kind of love. Learn to love that kind of love that is seen in the heart of God. To have your love shaped by it. Actually most of us learn to love by watching others. We watch our friends, our parents and our colleagues. We see that love in action, and if we want to be a loving person we often want to copy that. We learnt to love by watching love. Scripture tells us to look to the love we see in God. And we see it most closely in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God so loved the world ... But Christ’s death was not the last word. Dying in agony and rising in glory, and this is all made possible by the Love of God. When St Paul talks about it he says this: Love is Patient, love is kind, it’s not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude - etc etc. And this text says DO justice and LOVE LOVE. Let your love be shaped by what you have seen, and known and felt, in Jesus Christ.

We’re to DO justice, to LOVE LOVE and to Walk Humbly with God. Walking humbly with God means getting the right perspective and expressing that in every day life. It doesn’t mean govvelling or false modesty. Or that subservience of Uriah Heap – “**I’m ever so humble**” – it means recognising that everything and everyone around us is made by God and is precious to God, and we need to respect this. William Temple puts it like this – “humility doesn’t mean thinking any less of yourself, or other people, nor does it mean having a low opinion of your own gifts.” Humility is being aware that we are part of something much larger than we can possibly comprehend. Every part of creation is special, everyone is made in the image of God. We all need each other, we all need grace, we all need help, we all need love.

That’s what it means to walk humbly with God. That is what we are called to do. To do Justice, to Love mercy and to Walk humbly with God. Micah’s invitation is a way to live simply and well for God. But before you adopt it, just remember there is a cost. I wonder as we read the Magnificat if Mary had heard Micah’s words. She had said as we said that is a good way to live your life. To do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

And when she sings that Song, magnifying God’s name, those themes come through loud and stong. Justice, and Love and Humility. But what is clear is that Mary taking on this live will not only bring great

joy, but also great pain. She will bring her son into the world and watch him die. As Simoeon says it will be like a sword cutting through her soul. Jo Cox – on the board next to the memorial flowers it says: Micah 6: DO justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God – YOU DID. What a wonderful tribute at the end of anyone’s life. How will you live your life from this moment?

Oh, said the gardener it was not for a harvest of pumpkins that I asked you to grow, it was so you could be transformed into a carriage fit for the prince of peace. **Amen.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Let us pray.

We pray for the Church in every land . . .for this church and for other local churches . . . that we may worship and serve you with reverence and joy.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for the peoples of the world . . . and for the leaders of the nations . . .that all may work together for justice and peace. Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who are ill or distressed . . . for the lonely and the bereaved . . . and for those in any other need or trouble . . . that they may be comforted and sustained.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father, we remember before you all your servants who have died in the faith of Christ.

We pray that we too may lead faithful and godly lives in this world, and finally share with all the saints in everlasting joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Lord’s Prayer: -**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And Lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Hymn – STF 545 – Be thou my vision**

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;  
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;  
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

4 Riches I heed not, nor earth’s empty praise:  
be thou mine inheritance now and always;  
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 High King of heaven, thou heaven’s bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won;  
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

### **Blessing**

The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth, give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and to proclaim the word and works of God; and the blessing of God, Spirit, Son and Father, remain with you always. **Amen.**

CCLI licence 178041