

Social Justice

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Preacher: Rev. Clive Jennings

[0 : 0 0] the prophets came the prophets lived the prophets shared and the thing that we talked about the theme this morning is about justice and the people frankly should have mirrored the heart of God but they didn't hence we get this outpouring all the time from the prophets to say follow the heart of God as I was thinking about this today as well as our reading I sense this reading from Micah which kept coming back to me again and again he has shown you what is good and what does the Lord require of you to act justly to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God thank you so many prophets so many messages and as disciples that's what we're called to do to be more like Jesus empowered by the spirit when it comes to issues of justice and injustice we are called to engage and not just observe we talk a lot about justice our tv screens show us that a life in all of its tragedy and yet so often we turn a blind eye we just turn a blind eye because we fail to engage with that being a bringer of hope to those who have no voice to those who are unable to speak out for themselves Micah lays it out as we can bring hope to those areas of injustice and he reminds his people that they're what they are called to do in the face of injustice seek me and live seek me seek God says the Lord and live in all its fullness and as I read this I thought what Jesus said in response to that question that question of you know what is the greatest commandment well the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind this is the greatest commandment the second is like unto it is to love your neighbor as yourself on this hangs all the law and the prophets that's what they were saying listen listen to me says Jesus because this is what it was all about it's simple as a famous meerkat once said it's not that difficult Amos spells out God's message know my heart of justice and don't sit back don't ignore it their disobedience was evident these three churches that he spoke about were once great churches they had great spiritual heritage but now because the people had looked to themselves and their own needs they had become places of vain empty worship vain empty worship because they had lost their heart they had looked inwards rather than outwards justice wasn't on their agenda Amos explained why God was worthy to be sought Micah makes it clear and there's no more business as usual as far as he's saying step out and step in Micah emphasizes the need to do social justice not just to pay lip service to it not to be happy with providing humility kindness goodness awareness that's the role of God in us and we've heard much of that this morning power and justice on our terms is a very very dangerous combination we'll have a little scenario here just so that we think about justice on our own terms we're driving down a dual carriageway and there are the signs that roadworks are about to happen and the road will narrow in 800 meters or for those of us in old money yards and so we look at the signs

don't we and being good good righteous people that we are so compliant and so conforming we move straight away into the left hand lane looking forward to joining that queue because we're British and we love a queue so there we are totally conforming most kind understanding law-abiding people that we are in that left hand lane and as we all slow up and come to walking pace 600 meters 400 meters 200 and then we're aware of the white van in the outside lane bombing down and here we go don't we and this is where we challenge ourselves about justice isn't it because have you noticed that suddenly as we see that left hand indicator come on on the van suddenly everything closes up doesn't it you can't even get a paper between the front bumper and the back bumper of the car in front of you oh my goodness corporately are we going to show justice to this person who has broken the rules it's an interesting thing isn't it on all of us this issue about justice how suddenly we're quite happy to show people how justice should be done when actually the injustice often in ourselves we pay lip service to and don't do anything about if I mentioned social justice there wouldn't be any of us who wouldn't agree who wouldn't disagree at all in any way that food poverty is wrong issues of inequality and injustice is wrong that we should seek god's heart

when we encounter injustice for the marginalized the culture sadly has moved into covetousness of looking after ourselves and so god calls us through the prophets and through jesus to look outwards to these issues of social justice to be the church that he calls us to be because it's so easy to be silent isn't it and you know when we hear the church speak out it's sort of hollow words isn't it often not backed by action martin nehmoller was a prominent lutheran pastor in germany during the second world war he emerged as an outspoken person against the nazi regime and because of that because he spoke out he was in prison for seven years as a form of confession i think he spoke and wrote these words first they came for the socialists and i did not speak out because i was not a socialist then they came for the trade unionists i didn't speak out because i wasn't a trade unionist then they came for the jews i did not speak out because i wasn't a jew but then they came for me and there was no one left to speak we are called as we think in our discipleship and in this series about justice our discipleship we differentiate don't we the ability to speak out in action rather than just stepping back and being quiet we can't ignore it justice is a concern for justice peace and a genuine respect for people that's what the dictionary says the problem in many of the prophets views in micah was the failure of god's people to care adequately for others what does the lord require of you to act justice to

act justly to love mercy and to walk humbly with your god seek me and live i don't make a comment i'm going to make a comment on social and political things at the moment because we all know that it's charged with mistrust deliberate misinformation personal attacks and where does that leave the common person often justice doesn't fit within the rhetoric this being said where does that leave us as a church i think that leaves us looking at the cost of what it does to actually for us as a body of christ to make a difference in the everyday because as we come as one like we saw in the early church as we saw in the acts to church and acts as we moved through acts the people came together and they made a difference a huge difference because what they did is they sacrificed everything came together they sold land they sold houses they came together to make a difference and it was a beacon and people were drawn to it like a moth to the flame because they saw these people that weren't just talking about it that actually did it and as a church what does the lord require of you what does the lord require of you each of us have got to answer that question when we pray and when we pray that prayer when we see about things in our community you know justice is not the same as equality because equality because equality presumes that all persons have equal standing which they don't and so we need to speak out and be there for the poor and the least as jesus called them justice requires to humble ourselves and gather we've heard much today of what the stories in uganda we hear it in our communities in our schools and many of us are called in different ways in this community into our schools into falcon camps into the food bank at the ukrainian cafe on a friday of children's lives transformed by tlg there is an equality that children can have the same because we spend an hour a week with them to enact justice to love kindness to walk humbly with god in single acts of kindness and justice that make a difference one step one person at a time and i'm sorry if this itches and scratches where you are this morning because it should it should for all of us you know periodic nods to equality doesn't constitute a faithful justice focused whole life discipleship you know unless we are living that life in the everyday you know we can't spend checks give money for disaster relief and then not worry about how we contribute to that you know we can't be well the injustice of child slave labor and then fill our wardrobes with cheap clothes that they've made you know we can't do sponsored walks and runs for various causes for the poor and needy and then refuse to change our consumerist lifestyle it's about our whole life discipleship and that's what jesus asks of us you know rather than that god offers thousands i love this thing micah says rather than offer god thousands of rams uh just offer him a thousand daily acts of love for each other walking humbly with god means knowing our discipleship and our call to social justice know his heart carry his presence that's what marks us out as disciples we carry his presence into the

every day and brings justice and we call it out and we drag it kicking and screaming from the darkness into the light in this series we are growing into disciples of jesus and as we regather of the church i believe that we have an opportunity afresh to regather with a new encouragement for justice in our communities and the communities we serve both here and far away can good conquer evil yes because it did it at the cross on our recent alpha course we talked about how jesus makes it possible makes it possible for everyone to know him to be changed and transformed through the power of the cross the answer is that we carry god's presence the goodness of god in us which combats evil this battle with injustice just isn't here it's in the heavenlies and we're called to join in

why because jesus calls us to do that so what does the lord require of you what does the lord require of you as we think about our discipleship and this issue of justice good will always conquer evil and evil will always be at the root of injustice i'll leave you with the words with nicky gumbel on our alpha course from tuesday how about doing some good there is so much injustice in our world and so much that can happen when we fight evil with good when we fight against injustice look at what other people have done in the past inspired by the example of jesus look how shaftesbury changed the whole social condition of his nation in the 19th century look at wilberforce how he led the campaign to abolish slavery look at martin luther king jr and how he fought to bring an end to the segregation between black and white in north america look at mother teresa who transformed so many lives by giving herself wholeheartedly to the service of the poor this is not just for the great heroes of history this is for you your life can make a real difference your life has a purpose you can leave a legacy of transformed lives do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good in jesus name