

## Sunday November 1, 2020

### Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

#### Welcome & Prayer

This week we continue our series through Micah and in Micah 6 God brings charges against His people Israel. After all the Lord had done for Israel in miraculously saved them out of their slavery in Egypt, he saved them from the evil plotting of their enemies. And yet Israel is acting like God's saving activity towards them is a burden, like His special provision for Israel interferes too much in their lives. Now Micah wrestles with one of the most fundamental issues in the Bible: how do guilty sinners like Israel and us make atonement for our sins? What can we do? Will God be pleased with even thousands of rams or human sacrifice? This is what we are exploring today.

*Heavenly Father, We also come before You as guilty of forgetting Your wonderful grace towards us. We admit that we have dishonoured You through our thoughts and actions. Despite your amazing work through sending Your Son to take away Your wrath towards us and also guilt, we forget Lord. And we are sorry. Let us today remember afresh Your wonderful work towards through Jesus. We thank you anew for Your atoning work through Your Son. So we pray that you would move in us and among us see You anew today. We pray this in Jesus name, Amen*

**Song – Hallelujah to the King of Kings** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uGw7WB1cg8>

Maker of the heavens and earth  
Exalted by the roar of a multitude:  
“Salvation and glory and power Belong to our God”.  
The cry of hallelujah resounds  
The fullness of time shows his victory  
Justice and truth are revealed His wisdom adored.

*Chorus: Hallelujah to the King of Kings  
Hallelujah the Almighty reigns  
Let us all rejoice and give him all our praise, our praise.*

Praise the Lord you servants of God  
All who fear him come, whether small or great:  
Fall before his throne in awe And worship him.  
Blessed are those who will feast  
At the glorious banquet of God himself;  
The wedding of the Lamb has come, His bride is now here.

Chorus:

**Song – Praise my soul** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyRIVbdsi4c>

#### Bible Reading – Micah 6:1-8 (NIV)

*Listen to what the LORD says: “Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. <sup>2</sup>“Hear, you mountains, the LORD’s accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. <sup>3</sup>“My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. <sup>4</sup>I brought you up out of Egypt & redeemed you from*

*the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you also Aaron and Miriam. <sup>5</sup> My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.” <sup>6</sup> 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 with your God.*

## Announcements

- **Morning Tea/Supper.** Our newest addition to our Sunday mornings is the ability to have morning tea. It looks a little different but it remains a great chance to encourage your fellow believers, talk about the service and to catch up with people that we have spoken to for months. If your able to come please make it a priority, especially in the next few weeks. And if you were able to bring your own keep cup then that will help with the rubbish we will produce!
- **Face masks.** Currently the NSW State government strongly recommended that people wear Face masks if they attend places of worship but stopped short from saying you had to wear face masks. We would strongly recommend that you do wear Face masks in church at the current time. There will be some washable face masks available from the back of the Church if you would like one.
- **Operation Christmas Child.** If you have forgotten to bring them then you can drop them off at Koorong before the end of the month.
- **Prayer meetings.** Don't forget we now have just one prayer meeting for the church, each Monday at 7m on ZOOM. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89793950885>
- **Focus for October – Reaching Out.** Over this year the amount of people that have shown an interest in spiritual things has increased. And the amount of people that have connected on line with the Church has also increased. So what can we do to encourage these people to connect with us and our Church. Well there will be a Ginger Bread house night available to us in the coming weeks but in many ways Christmas becomes even more important in 2020. Session will be thinking about how Christmas might look in the coming weeks but what we can do is start praying for opportunities to reach out with our friends and family. And praying for opportunities to invite them along over the Christmas period.
- **Gingerbread House** is going to look a little different this year. The plan is to invite a friend to your own home and make the gingerbread houses together sometime leading up to Christmas. All you need to do is purchase the house kit from Linda Small 0422 014 250 for \$26 each (gluten free options available) and purchase your own lollies to decorate. There will be a short gospel talk that you can stream/listen to while you are making the house. You will be encouraged to post a photo of your houses on Facebook and the aim is to try and invite your guest to a Christmas Day/Eve service. For more details please speak to Linda.
- **Bible Talks.** The training event for putting together a bible talk has been cancelled for today. Unfortunately many of our young people have exams at the moment and so could come. We plan to run it at a later date
- **Hunter Bible Teachers Workshop.** Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November – 19<sup>th</sup> November 8:30 – 3:30. Simon Manchester will be talking to us about the book of Titus. For more details go to the Hunter Gospel Ministries Website.
- **Bruce McKillop.** It was with great sadness that we heard the news this week that one of our regulars Bruce McKillop passed away at Groves House. His funeral will be held on Wednesday @ 10am at the North Chapel of Newcastle memorial Park, Beresfield.
- **JOY.** Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November 10-11, Belmont 16 footers.

## Kids Talk – Quizworx -

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YlrGlgGbfSkQuZ0s\\_dCIRV2uPhsSV5DL](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YlrGlgGbfSkQuZ0s_dCIRV2uPhsSV5DL)

## Song – Micah Song [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYK5Kh\\_lzY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYK5Kh_lzY)

### Prayer Points for Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Pray for Tunisia (Population 12 million, Christians 23,000).** The growing influence of Islamic extremism has increased hostility towards Christians in Tunisia. Believers who publicly profess their faith face job insecurity and assault, and are often isolated from their friends, family and community. Converts from Islam face the most persecution and are harassed, attacked and even locked in houses by their families. To leave Islam is viewed as a betrayal and a dishonour to family who will do anything to bring the believer back to their former faith. Spouses threaten to divorce believers and take their children away. Christians are not likely to be treated equally in court, particularly when it comes to issues involving family law.

**COVID-19.** Pray for those countries/states that are in full or partial lock-down. Pray that it might stop the spread of COVID. Pray for those who are struggling to cope with the isolation.

**Pray for all those who are struggling with mental illness or anxiety issues.** That they might receive practical help like personal support, medication if needed but also love from those around them. Pray that they might also reach out for the ultimate support available to them from God through His Holy Spirit and through the body of Christ, the Church.

**Pray for our young people doing exams, especially those doing the HSC**

**Pray for our Evening congregation.** Praise God for our young people and their growing commitment to not only come to Church each week but be involved in small groups, music ministry, IMPACT and a Christian witness at University. Pray that they might be growing in their faith and reaching out to their friends with the gospel.

**Pray for Josh Montzka (Power to Change, Melbourne).** Pray for Josh as he has found the lock-down in Melbourne particularly tough. Praise God for the projects that were able to be completed during #HACK. Pray that he might be able to support well the missionaries working for power to change in schools & universities. Pray for the tech team that he works closely with.

### Bible Reading – Micah 6:9-16 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> Listen! The LORD is calling to the city— and to fear your name is wisdom— “Heed the rod and the One who appointed it. <sup>10</sup> Am I still to forget your ill-gotten treasures, you wicked house, and the short ephah, which is accursed? <sup>11</sup> Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? <sup>12</sup> Your rich people are violent; your inhabitants are liars & their tongues speak deceitfully.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins. <sup>14</sup> You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing, because what you save I will give to the sword. <sup>15</sup> You will plant but not harvest; you will press olives but not use the oil, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine. <sup>16</sup> You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab’s house; you have followed their traditions. Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations.

### Sermon – The Lord vs His people <https://youtu.be/M9Gc3CsWR4k>

It seems Australians have an ongoing fascination with legal dramas. They are everywhere on TV aren’t they? Law & Order, Law & order: SVU, Law & Order: Criminal Intent, The Good Wife, Silk, Rake, Suits and Boston Legal have filled our screens for years. I wonder why that is? Is it the drama of the court room? The

winners and losers? The breadth of the issues that come before the courts? Whatever the reason, we may not like going to court ourselves but we certainly love seeing others in a court of law.

And so the scene is pretty familiar to us when in Micah 6, a new section of the book opens up and we find ourselves in a court of law. And before us is the case of The Lord vs His People. God has finally had enough. He is sick and tired of seeing the way his people have trashed the covenant that has been made between them. They have broken their end of the contract time and time again.

So the Lord takes his people to court. God is the prosecutor, God's people are the defendants & Micah is the court scribe writing down what is happening & it all begins with

**Slide 2**

### 1. God's charge against His people (verses 1-5, 9-12)

*"Listen to what the LORD says: "Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. <sup>2</sup>"Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel."*

The mountains are to hear the case. Creation, which has been watched on from the very beginning of Israel's relationship with God, is called to hear the charges that God is bringing against his people. The hills were there when God promised to be their God and the people promised to love and serve Him as their God. They were witnesses to the fact that there were blessings and curses attached as conditions if the covenant was ever broken by the parties. So they are the right ones to hear the charges that God has against his people.

**Slide 3**

So you would expect God would begin by listing all the ways that the people have broken the covenant. And we have already seen many of them raised by God in Micah 1-5. They have put idols before the one true God. They have engaged in prostitution. They have not been content with what God has given them so they have coveted their neighbour's blessings, they have stolen off the people down the street, they have defrauded women and children of their inheritance. And they have failed to give the oppressed justice.

**Slide 4**

All those things are true. They are the facts of the case. But that is not the heart of God's case. It is not primarily legal but personal. God's people have broken God's heart. Look at verse 3, <sup>3</sup>*"My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me."*

The people's actions have been like a slap in the face to their heavenly Father. It is like they are sick and tired of the relationship they have with Him. God has become a burden to them. They have had enough. They want to strike out in another direction, a new direction. So the Lord gives them a very brief history lesson. He reminds them that it was He who has saved them. V4, *"I brought you up out of Egypt & redeemed you from the land of slavery."*

**Slide 5**

Remember you only existed because the Lord your God chose you out of all the nations of the world. And he saved you from the most powerful nation in the world at the time. Remember that? The plagues I sent on Egypt. The parting of the Red Sea? The 40 years in the desert? The giving of the law and the covenant. I did that. That was me, not you.

Has that salvation now become boring for you? Does it make you yawn? Besides it was not an isolated episode what about the Philistines, the Syrians, the Midianites, the Assyrians and all the rest of your enemies that I saved you from? And you are sick of me?

And what about the leaders that I have given you? *“I sent Moses to lead you also Aaron and Miriam.”* Would you have preferred to go around and around in the desert like sheep without a shepherd? Like helpless toddlers abandoned in a massive shopping centre?

And don't forget the protection I have always given you. <sup>5</sup>*“My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.”* I, the Lord protected you from your enemies in the beginning, I have protected you throughout your history and I can protect you again right now.

Slide 6

The Lord says I have always kept my end of the bargain. I have loved you with an everlasting love. Throughout your history I have walked hand in hand with you through so many difficult times. And this is how you repay me? These are serious charges. And the evidence that the Lord gives is well documented. Indisputable in fact. But before we start pointing the finger at the Israelites, isn't there a number of fingers pointing back to us as well?

For doesn't the Lord also have a covenant with us? A new covenant. Where he saved us by sending his one and only son to die in our place. Where he has written the law on our hearts through his Holy Spirit. Where He answers our prayers & sends us blessings & protects us & gives us a good shepherd & plenty of capable under shepherds. And don't we get bored with this? With this good news? And want to move on to something fresher and more exciting.

Slide 7

Isn't that the point of the hymn, *“Tell Me the Old, Old Story.”* The second verse says, *“Tell me the story slowly, that I may take it in. That wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin. Tell me the story often, for I forget so soon. The early dew of morning is passed away at noon.”* That's us! That's what you and I are like. Micah knows it. And you and I know it. The Lord then has a charge against his people, us included. Remember what I have done for you. Remember who you are. The Lord loves us & we need to love Him more than anything else.

And it is only then does Micah go on with a list of charges, lets skip ahead to verses 9-12. If God has done all that for us then surely our ways should reflect God's ways.

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But <sup>9</sup>*Listen! The LORD is calling to the city— and to fear your name is wisdom— “Heed the rod and the One who appointed it. <sup>10</sup>Am I still to forget your ill-gotten treasures, you wicked house, and the short ephah, which is accursed? <sup>11</sup>Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? <sup>12</sup>Your rich people are violent; your inhabitants are liars & their tongues speak deceitfully.*

You see the sign that God's people have forgotten their first love is that they rip others off in business. They involve themselves with acts of violence. They speak lies. For when we are no longer satisfied with God's grace, we instead turn to power, money and status instead. We put them as number 1 and serve them rather than serve our Lord God.

Slide 9

And maybe you and I don't have dodgy scales but when we put our work before our Church, when we take that promotion and it means we can no longer go to bible study, when we use our power to feather our nest rather than lift up the oppressed, when we are more concerned about our flourishing or our families success over what is going on all around us, we too will hear a similar charge directed towards us from our Lord and God.

Slide 10

## 2. God's Charge, The People's Case (verses 6-7)

So Israel has been caught with their hand in the till. They have been called to defend themselves against some pretty serious charges so how are they going to respond? Will they agree, put up their hand and say,

you are right, it is all true. Guilty as charged? No they are bewildered! They are defiant and they try to paint a picture of an unreasonable God.

*<sup>6</sup>“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?”*

Do you get the feel or the tone? Come on God! Enough is enough. I already come to the Temple each Sabbath to worship you. I already give you 10% of my income. I already sing my praises and offer up to you prayers. What more do you want more than my worship?

Slide 11

Do you want me to bring a costly sacrifice each week, a calf a year old, where we will not just sacrifice this young animal but burn it whole so I don't even get to eat it in a fellowship meal? Is that what you require? Or do you want me to take it a step forward. Do you want me to do what Solomon did at the inauguration of the Temple where he offered a thousand sacrifices and rivers of precious olive oil? Or do you want me to step it up again and do what Abraham did on Mount Moriah where he went to offer his own son as a living sacrifice?

Is that what you want me to do? Do you want me to buy you off? To bribe you? Alright I will do that, just let me get out my credit card and I will fix up the situation quick smart.

But again let's not point the finger because sometimes you and I do something similar. God let's do a deal I will come regularly to Church, pray each day and read my bible and that should be enough for you to give me a successful life. A family that will not go through too many troubles. Or we say to the Lord I will give to the Church & to various charities regularly so you should make sure I have all the money I need to live the life I desire.

Slide 12

### **3. God's charge, the people's case and thirdly the prophets call (verse 8)**

But then it is like Micah cannot contain himself. He puts down his pencil as the court scribe and says to the defendants, you are being silly. *<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 with your God.”*

He says to his people, it is not the amount of worship that you give God that is the key thing. It is not even the cost of your worship that is important. God doesn't want your cash or your time. He wants you. He wants you to be authentic in your devotion. He wants more than just an hour a day or a day a week, he wants your life.

Slide 13

And the Lord sees whether you are willing to give him your whole life by looking at whether he sees in your life a commitment to justice. Whether you personally are committed to doing what is right and fair. Always. At home. At work. In the Church. In the community. Justice means that where we have the power to do so we punish wrongdoing and we create an environment where the right thing is always done.

A butcher was asked how his life changed after he accepted Christ. His reply was, "I stopped weighing my thumb." He used to leave his thumb on the scale every time he weighed a piece of meat which would mean the customers always got less than what they paid for. "Since I became a Christian," he said, "I quit weighing my thumb, in fact, I now give them a little more than what they pay for to make up for all the years I have overcharged them."

This is what happened to Zacchaeus when he met Jesus. The Tax Collector stood up and said to him, "Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Do you know what Jesus said to him, "Today, salvation has come to this house."

Slide 14

But it is more than acting justly, it is loving mercy. It is not just that we will act justly but we are passionate about justice. We refuse to give up on people. We will forgive them and wipe the slate clean again and again and again. We will not just give people what they deserve but we will do what God has always done for us. Give others grace, we will show others mercy, we will forgive them their sins as the Lord has forgiven us our sins.

Now that might seem a tall order. To do justice to all. To love mercy for all. That's just too hard, there are too many out there to be able to do that to all people.

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Remember the words of Mother Theresa who once said "Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest to you."

Slide 16

And you will only be able to act justly and to love mercy if you walk humbly with your God. When we allow God to call the tune, to set the path, to lead you where ever he wants you to go. And you can't just do that on a Sunday, it must be all day, every day. It's a life of constant fellowship. It's the sheep always following the good shepherd. For the more you hang around God the more his character is going to rub off on you. And he always acts justly, he always loves mercy. These qualities do not come to us from heaven wrapped in a parcel, they only rub off on when we weekly, daily, hourly walk humbly with our God.

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In the words of Bill Curtis, in "*Micah 6:8 God was saying to his people, "I am not looking for people who simply practise religious activities, I want people who profess authentic faith in Me. I don't want people who play at religion, I want people who love Me and because they love Me, they want to be like Me. Because then their lives, families and nation will reflect Me to the world."*

Slide 18

And of course Jesus perfectly models this to us in the gospels. He will stand up for the oppressed. He cares for the widow and the poor and he doesn't give you and I what we deserve. Jesus perfectly models this to us. So if we walk with Him, then those sorts of qualities will over time rub off on you and me.

And the irony is that it was God Himself who made the costliest sacrifice in history when he didn't just offer a one year old calf, or came before us with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of olive oil but He offered his firstborn son for our transgressions. Who fulfilled his end of the covenant and also fulfilled ours as well.

So at this stage we have heard God's charge, we have been told Israel's defence & we have been reminded by Micah that we can't just buy God off with our time or money. We can't fool Him with just some outward act of devotion. It's whether we are walking with Him right now. It's whether we have stopped defending ourselves before a holy God, we have admitted that our lives have fallen short, way short of what God requires of us. We have laid down our guns. Stopped fighting the Lord. And accepted his gift to us of his son and we are now walking in faith with Jesus as a fitting response to all that He has done for us.

Slide 19

When Kaylene and I first sent our kids to the local public school back in Tweed Heads, the school motto was "act justly, love mercy and walk humbly". This really is the basis of the good life that God is calling all people to live. It is a summary of the moral law to love God and to love our neighbours. And it can be used as a measuring stick for each one of us to determine whether the grace of God has truly changed our lives or not.

#### 4. So what will be the court's decision? (verses 13-16)

Well at the end of the chapter we see that God's people are convicted due to the weight of the evidence against them. It is an open and shut case that God's people were never going to win. And so the judgement is read out.

<sup>13</sup>“Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins.” Justice will be done in this heavenly court room. But notice how the judgement will come to the people. If they turn away from God then God determines that what they turn to will not satisfy them. <sup>14</sup>“You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing because what you save I will give to the sword. <sup>15</sup>You will plant but not harvest you will press olives but not use the oil, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine.”

The Lord's judgement may not come initially in an outward form of punishment. It comes with a level of futility. The things we put our trust in fail to deliver what we require of them. The hard work that we put in may not bring the rewards that they promised us. We work hard and the spoils go to someone else. We enjoy our homes and belongings but they don't fill the space inside of us that brings us happiness and fulfilment. This life doesn't satisfy.

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Of course it doesn't satisfy because we have lost our first love. We have forgotten God's grace and kindness. We are living in God's world without following God's word. And we have seen that to be true in our nation, haven't we? In recent times we have thrown away God's ways, God's standards, God's worship because we thought it was holding us back. We are now richer & less content. We have more power but we feel more and more like victims. We thought it would lead us to freedom but we are trapped more and more in our sin.

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So there is frustration now and destruction later. <sup>16</sup>“You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house; you have followed their traditions. Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations.”

Futility and then finality. Ruin. Scorn. Punishment. The court is giving the people exactly what they deserved. Justice is being done.

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Yet why is this in God's word? Why is it being read out to you & I today? It all seems done and dusted. It looks like the people have lost and they are about to be thrown into jail and the key thrown away. But in the words of Dale Ralph Davis, *the warnings of judgement we need to see the wrappings of grace*. This is not the end of the story of Micah, we will see the hope in the midst of judgement next week & it is not the end of the story of the Bible either.

For in the New Testament we see that Jesus identifies with his people. That Jesus was given over to ruin. He was derided by his people, he bore the scorn of the nations. He took the punishment that you and I deserve. Jesus went into the heavenly courtroom and took our place in the defendant's box. The charges against God's people were hurled at God's one and only son. The judge became the accused. And he then felt the full weight of God's law.

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The story is told of a man who was caught and taken to court because he had stolen a loaf of bread. When the judge investigated he found that the man had no job and his family were hungry. He had tried again and again to get work and when he couldn't he stole a loaf of bread to feed his family.

It was an open and shut case, and the judge found the man guilty. And ordered the man to pay the appropriate fine. He then reached into his pocket and paid the fine himself. He then declared to the court



that now that the debt had been satisfied he was ordering the court to remit the fine and so that man was given the fine amount. And he finished by saying “I am going to instruct the bailiff to pass around the hat and I am fining everyone in the courtroom for living in a city where a man has to steal in order to feed himself and his family.”

Now that’s a legal drama that would be worth watching. For friends we are the ones in the dock this morning. And the Lord God has read out the charges against us. And we are guilty. And we should be subject to a life of frustration, futility and then onto eternal judgement. But there is no condemnation for those who in Christ Jesus. Jesus has paid the price. He has taken the punishment that we deserved. The guilty are given grace. The murdered gets mercy. The kidnapper gets kindness. And we are able to walk out of the courtroom free.

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Free, scott free because of Jesus. So what do we do next? We should “act justly, we love mercy and we from then on walk humbly with our God”.

**Song – This life I live** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cIZA9HFxtU>

**Song – Just a closer walk with thee** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6Ks49apflE>

## **Benediction**

*<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 with your God.*

## **Morning Tea**

Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don’t want to be just consumers of Church, we want to be a part of the family of God. So why not give one or two people a call. Who might your ring now?