

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Valentin Dedji. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome & Invocation:

Dear friends, it is my great joy to connect with you at this moment on this on-line platform. Thank you for welcoming me in your homes. We meet in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen!

For those who may not know me, I am Rev. Valentin Dedji, a minister in the Enfield Methodist Circuit, in North London.

Our first hymn is an invitation to focus on the Kingdom of God which is 'Justice and Joy', 'Mercy and Grace', 'Challenge and Choice'. In times like these, it would be advisable to accept such an invitation. Let's sing then StF 255 'The Kingdom of God'

Hymn: StF 255 'The Kingdom of God is Justice and Joy'

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/vqCOggQhFyo>

1. The kingdom of God
Is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores
What sin would destroy;

God's power and glory
in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.

2. The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.
3. The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice,
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross
our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.
4. God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole;

the heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory
to God all in all!

Bryn Rees (1911 – 1983)

Prayers of Adoration:

O Loving God, as we gather to worship You,
we invoke the dynamic Spirit,
breathe upon our hearts today;
that we may inherit your power
hear us, Spirit, as we pray:
fill the vacuum that enslaves us -
emptiness of heart and soul;
and, through Jesus Christ who saves us,
give us life and make us whole.

Let's then come to Christ whoever we are: Young and old.
Let's come in trust in Christ and live in peace,
anticipate that final light
when strife and bigotry shall cease,
and faith be lost in praise and sight.
And, through Jesus Christ who leads us,
may we receive the truth that makes us whole. **Amen!**

1st Bible Reading: Isaiah 1:17-18 (NIV)

¹⁷ Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.
¹⁸ "Come now, let us settle the matter,"
says the LORD.
"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

2nd Bible Reading: Luke 19: 1-10 (NIV)

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, 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.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Sermon: Theme: ‘LET JUSTICE ROLL’

Dear friends,

Some of you may still remember the seminar that the Enfield Methodist Circuit organised on the 8th of February, this year. The theme of the said seminar was: ‘Seeing the Unseen, Listening to the Voiceless’. The major focus point of the presentations by all the speakers during that seminar, was an invitation to reflect afresh on the Biblical concept of Justice as expressed by prophets such as Amos who said: **‘Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.’** (Amos 5: 21-24). As for prophet Micah, he presents us with a soul-searching question which is still challenging for our

societies today, more crucially for the way we live out our Christian faith in our local communities, churches, work places and families. This prophet Micah’s question for each of us: **‘And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.’** (Micah 6:8).

As if God’s concerns for Justice, Mercy and Righteousness among His people do not know any barriers, our first Bible reading of today from the book of Isaiah gives us a more practical commandment: **‘Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of orphans; plead the case of the widow.’** (Isaiah 1:17). This gives us the opportunity to reflect briefly on three key points:

1. Justice, Mercy and Righteousness as a Divine Mandate

The theologian Ireneau said that the Glory of God is immensely revealed, whenever humankind is restored through acts of justice, mercy and righteousness. This means that one thing is to express our Christian faith; but our faith can only be in harmony with the will of God if it bears fruit through our acts of justice, mercy and righteousness towards those who need us most. That was exactly what prophet Isaiah did by giving us a comprehensive ‘to do list’ and by inviting us to humbly seek God’s Spirit of discernment to guide us: **‘Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of orphans; plead the case of the widow.’** (Isaiah 1:17).

Personally, I am convinced that in the context of economic and political crisis that the whole world is currently going through, this is what God would want for his people. Jesus could not be clearer when He declared: ***'Blessed are those who hunger for justice and righteousness, for they will see God'***.

2. Justice, Mercy and Righteousness for All

In our Gospel reading from Luke 19: 1-10, Jesus gives us the practical example that acts of justice, mercy and righteousness should be extended to all in need, regardless of their social background.

Historically, Jews are very reluctant when it comes to dealing with non-Jews. For example, Jews consider Samaritans and Palestinians as their most notorious enemies.

In the story narrated in Luke 19: 1-10, we read that Jesus deliberately decided to go through the city of Jericho, as He was on his way to Jerusalem. Then, not only He had an encounter with a gentleman called Zacchaeus, but crucially, Jesus entered Zacchaeus' house and had dinner with him. The big irony in the story was that, Jericho was not a Jewish city (it is still part of Palestine). Also, not only Zacchaeus was not a Jew, but as a tax-collector, he was considered as a crook and a sinner by his own people. Yet Jesus openly broke down all the walls of prejudices that society have built across generations around people like Zacchaeus and declared: ***'Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of***

Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." (Luke 19: 9-10). This means clearly that, Salvation from Jesus does not take into consideration people's racial or social backgrounds. Therefore, we are warned to be very careful, not to fall in those traps.

In the specific case of Zacchaeus it is amazing to see how, by connecting to him Jesus restored his human dignity and activated his potential for repentance in order to have access to Salvation through Christ that is reserved to all who truly repent from their sins. We read that: ***Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.***" (Luke 19:8). This confirms Jesus' well-known statement according to which: 'For God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten Son that, whosoever believes in Him, may not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16).

3. Justice, Mercy and Righteousness: Lessons for today

By challenging discrimination against the marginalised, the voiceless, the poor and the oppressed of his time, Jesus invites us to reflect afresh on how we live our faith today in the midst of a number of unjust, heartless, and merciless structures that surround us.

Here we need to thank God for the visionary and prophetic work of so many charitable organisations that are doing their best to respond to God's invitation to ***'Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of orphans; plead the case of the widow.'*** To quote but few: Food Banks across the UK provide a well needed assistance to so many people whose life has suddenly become precarious. The Enfield Methodist Circuit plays a pioneering role in that field through our various Food Banks at Edmonton, Ponders End and Ordnance Road Methodist Churches. Other organisations include: 'Christians Against Poverty' (CAP), 'Feed the Hungry', UNSEEN UK...

There is no doubt that, putting into practice Jesus' teaching comes with a number of spiritual, personal as well as material challenges. Let me take this opportunity to inform you that, during the last two weeks, members of Edmonton Methodist have started a new and bold fundraising campaign in order to rebuild their church building, to make it fit for its mission towards the youth, the elderly, the homeless and for many other community-building activities for the Glory of God. This is in line with what John Wesley so fondly called 'social holiness'. To be more precise, I have personally started a challenge to walk Two Million footsteps, in order to raise Two Millions Pounds towards the rebuilding project. Yes indeed, we are going through an unprecedented economic crisis due to the war in Ukraine. But, let's not forget that, as long as we

keep our faith and trust in our Almighty God, He will always show us that He is the Lord of abundance, even in the middle of the deepest crisis. That's when Jesus enjoys saying: 'Come, ye faithful servant: come and take the crown of Victory that has been reserved for you.' What a blessing would that be! Amen!!!

Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God! As with silent hearts we bring to mind how hate and war diminish humankind, we pause - and seek in worship to increase our knowledge of the things that make for peace.

Lord Jesus, sanctify our thoughts as we recall humbly the lives of those who gave and give their all. We thank you, Lord, for women, children, men who seek to serve in love, today as then.

When our families are broken;
when our homes are full of strife;
when our children are bewildered,
when they lose their way in life;
when we fail to give the aged
all the care we know we should -
hear our cry and heal our nation
with your tender fatherhood and motherhood.

Give us Lord, a deep faith to comfort those who mourn,
high hope to share with all the newly born,
strong love in our pursuit of human worth:
For we are all created in God's image.

So Jesus, Prince of Peace, disarm our trust in power,
teach us to stimulate the plant of peace to flower.
May we, impassioned by your living Word,
work towards a world restored.

We pray for all who struggle to make ends meet due to this economic crisis. We pray for our MPs, local authorities, government ministers: May you grant them Lord your divine wisdom in all their decision making. We also pray for all churches and charitable organizations so that, they may be equip to fulfil their various mission work. In your name, Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen!**

Final Hymn: 'StF 251 'Jesus is waiting'

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/Wqwzlel4-5E>

1. Jesus Christ is waiting,
waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour,
all alone he eats.

Listen, Lord Jesus,
I am lonely too.
make me, friend or stranger,
fit to wait on you.

2. Jesus Christ is raging,
raging in the streets,
where injustice spirals
and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus
I am angry too;
In the Kingdom's causes
let me rage with you.
3. Jesus Christ is healing,
healing in the streets;
curing those who suffer,
touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I have pity too:
let my care be active,
healing, just like you.

4. Jesus Christ is dancing,
dancing in the streets,
where each sign of hatred
He, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus
I should triumph too:
where good conquers evil
let me dance with you.
5. Jesus Christ is calling,
calling in the streets,
'Who will join my journey?,
I will guide their feet.'
Listen, Lord Jesus,
let my fears be few.
walk one step before me;
I will follow you

John Bell (Born 1949) and Graham Maule (Born 1958)

Blessing:

May the day never burden you.
May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new
day with dreams, possibilities and promises.
May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.
May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.
May your soul calm, console and renew you through the power
of God

And, may the Peace of God that surpasses every understanding
remain with you, now and forever. **Amen!**

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