

## Humility – Zoom service 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020

### Welcome:

Welcome to our Zoom service

- It is good to be together again and to meet with each other and with God.
- Today will be the third in our mini-series on Micah 6:8
- And we will be sharing communion this morning.
- Please make sure you have something to represent the bread and wine for that part of the service.
- Let's begin with a prayer

### Prayer:

Lord Jesus,

Thank you that you love us and have called us to follow you. Thank you that you love us, that we are precious to you.

Lord, we are sorry we often let you down and it is good to know that our place in your kingdom is dependent on your death and resurrection, not on anything we have done ourselves.

We ask for your forgiveness for our failures, weaknesses, and sinfulness and that you will restore us and grant us faith to hold firmly to you.

We ask that we know your presence with us this morning. That you speak to us and minister to us through your Holy Spirit.

For your name's sake

Amen

### Reading: Philippians 2: 1- 13 (NIV) - Imitating Christ's Humility

*Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

<sup>5</sup> *In your relationships with one another, have the same mind-set as Christ Jesus:*

<sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature God,*

*did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

<sup>7</sup> *rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,*

*being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*

<sup>9</sup> *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,*

<sup>10</sup> *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

<sup>11</sup> *and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.*

## **Worship: Jenny B**

### **Prayers:**

- Birthdays – Jenny H
- Our communal prayers are due to focus on The Friendship Group and Mid-Week Break (Carer and Toddler group)
- Obviously neither of these groups are meeting at present but let's pray for all those who would attend
- For the leaders of those groups
- Especially Hilary who is still phoning every member of the group each week
- Are there any other items for prayer?

### **Open prayer**

#### **Reading: Romans 12:1-21**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.*

<sup>3</sup> *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

<sup>9</sup> *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

<sup>14</sup> *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

<sup>17</sup> *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:*

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

<sup>21</sup> *Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.*

## Sermon:

This is the third in our mini-series based on Micah 6:8

*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.*

We have looked at justice

- Particularly in the light of the Black Lives matter protests
- And justice in this context is about vindication, voice and value
- We had three reasons to be just
  1. It is God nature to be just and fair
  2. It is the right way to behave
  3. And we have also been victims of injustice

We have looked at Mercy

- And how justice and mercy are inextricably linked
- Mercy has no meaning without justice

Just as with justice we are called to be merciful for the same three reasons

1. God is by nature merciful
2. Being merciful is the right and loving thing to do
3. God has been merciful towards us.

Now we come to walking humbly with God

- But this is a difficult one for us
- Justice we understand – we can march for that
- Mercy, we can relate to
- Being non-judgemental, Yes, that makes sense to us
- But humility?

it's hard to have a rallying call to be humble

- To be kind possibly
- Yes, people called for that after the death of Caroline Flack
- But not humility

Self-belief and self-assertiveness

- That is what we want today
- And you can easily find books and courses to help you achieve these.
- But I would be amazed if you could find a book on
- 'The Secret of Being Humble'

When Captain Kirk set out to explore Space – the final frontier

- He didn't meekly go where no one had been before
- Even in church we sing "Be Bold, Be Strong"
- But never 'Be meek, Be humble,'

It can't be right for us to be a doormat and allow ourselves to be taken advantage of.

- Isn't that a complete contradiction of what we have been saying
- How can we reconcile the idea of being humble with the call to stand up for justice?

Yet here it is in Micah 6:8

- Alongside justice and mercy
- So, what does the bible mean when it talks of humility
- Maybe we need to start with this

### **What is Meant by Humility in the Bible?**

In the New Testament the word most often translated humble is Tapeinoo

- This is the word used of Jesus in Philippians 2 that we read earlier  
*And being found in appearance as a man, he (Jesus) humbled himself*
- It literally means 'to make low'
- It is exactly the same word used in Luke 3
- Referring to the prophesy about John the Baptist  
*A voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low."*  
(Luke 3:4-5)
- Or 'every mountain and hill 'humbled''

Humility is translated from the Greek 'Tapeinophrosine'

- This is an amalgamation of two words
- Tapeino - low
- Phrosine – in the mind
- So, humility is having a low opinion of yourself

That doesn't sound so good to us.

- Especially with the problems of low self-esteem that seem endemic in our society
- But isn't this what Paul is saying to the Roman Christians?
- As we have just read in Romans 12
- *"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment."* (vs.3)
- *"Honour one another above yourselves".* (vs.10)
- *"Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.* (vs 16)

That begins to make more sense

- Maybe it helps to think of opposites
- So, rather than saying it is having a low opinion
- Is it better to say, 'Not having an exalted opinion of ourselves'?
- So, the opposite of humble is being proud, arrogant, and boastful
- And we recognise these as unpleasant, unproductive attitudes

So maybe what we mean by humility is not 'putting yourself down'

- But having an accurate and reasonable opinion of yourself
- Recognising our weaknesses as well as our value
- Our self-opinionated hills brought low, but our low self-worth valleys raised up

Maybe being humble is about not putting on an act, not hiding our faults

- Not pretending to be better than we are
- If so, we don't have to live in fear of being exposed as a fake
- Free from the anxiety of people not liking us if they knew what we were really like.
- That would indeed be a blessed position to be in, wouldn't it?

As Rudyard Kipling says in His famous poem 'If'

*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same....  
(then)... Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,*

### **Blessed are Meek**

Maybe that's what Jesus meant when he said

- *"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."* (Matt 5:5)
- It's interesting that two of the beatitudes have to do with humility
- There is also
- *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt 5:3)

The poor in Spirit is sometimes translated as 'Those who know they are spiritually poor'

- Or possibly, as we've said already, this means
- 'Those who don't have an exalted opinion of their own spirituality'

I am using humility and meekness to be pretty much synonymous here.

- The word 'meek' in the Hebrew is Anayv
- It means low in mind or circumstances
- So, pretty much the same definition as humble

Jesus clearly saw humility and meekness as an attitude to be admired and emulated

- That's what Blessed means in this context
- The Greek word is 'makarios' which means favoured and admired
- In other words, 'blessed' in this context means someone we look up to
- Someone we aspire to be
- Someone who has the characteristics or lifestyle we want to have.

We all have aspirations in life,

- Some we achieve and some we don't
- But we feel if we do achieve them our lives will be happier, more meaningful
- Possibly, we may even think, more valuable.
- Much of what we do comes from the desire to be blessed
- We don't use that actual word, but it is what is meant

For example, at school we are told

- Blessed are those who pass their exams future employment is theirs
- Adverts use this idea all the time
- Blessed is she who uses this brand of Shampoo for she is worth it.
- Blessed is he who drives this car because he will be admired

So, when Jesus stands up and says

- *“Blessed are those who know they are spiritually poor; theirs is the Kingdom of heaven*
- He is saying “All you should aspire to in life can be achieved by knowing you are spiritually poor”
- In knowing our need of God.
- We do not help ourselves, or others, by attempting to value them by their achievements

So, where pride says – “look what I have done, aren’t I great – I’m better than you

- Where it points at others and say
- “You haven’t achieved what I have achieved - You’re worth less than me”
- Humility says. “My worth is determined by God”
- It is not defined by what I have done, whether it is good or bad

I guess this follows on from last week

- When we talked about not attributing values to actions
- When a child does something naughty, we should say “that was a bad thing to do”
- Not “You are a bad child”
- Concentrate on the action and don’t devalue the person

So, maybe that is true of our achievements also

- Doing something good doesn’t necessarily make us a good person
- Any more than doing something bad makes us a wholly bad person
- I think this is at the root of the debate we have been having about statues
- Should a person be commemorated when they also did some really bad things?

The danger of putting someone on a plinth is that we end up idolising the person

- When what we should be doing is celebrating the achievement
- The person will inevitably be flawed
- Because they are human like us
- We should neither idolise nor condemn the person
- We can praise or deplore the action, or the sentiment
- But mercy requires us to have compassion on the person

### **The Example of Moses**

There is a great example of humility in the Old Testament

- In Numbers 12:3 we read  
*“Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth”*

Now that is quite an accolade

- What do we know about Moses?
- He was a murderer.
- He possibly had a stammer and didn't seek out greatness
- Yet he stood in front of Pharaoh and demanded "Let my people go!"
- And led the Israelites out of slavery to the promised land.
- His achievements were considerable

This was not what we would consider as a weak man.

- Not someone who was subservient and put up with injustice
- How could he be both humble and strong
- I think the clue is in Exodus 4, verses 10-12

*Moses said to the LORD, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."*

*<sup>11</sup> The LORD said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" <sup>12</sup> Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."*

Moses did not rely on his own ability but trusted in God's

- I believe this is the true understanding of humility
- It is faith in God's ability rather than our own
- As Paul tells the Philippians

*I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:11-13)*

Humility is about putting God in the centre of our universe rather than ourselves.

- Then our circumstances have less power to affect us
- This could be why Micah does not tell us to be humble
- But to walk humbly with our God
- There is a subtle difference

### **Walk Humbly with Our God**

We are told to act justly and love mercy

- But more than just 'walk humbly'
- Micah remind us it is God who we should walk humbly with
- This is important
- It is primarily God who we need to be humble towards
- Being humble towards each other derives from this

Romans 12, our passage for this morning begins with worshipping God

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

It is God who gives us our meaning and value

- It is God who makes us worthy
- God who determines us as valuable and precious
- If we are humble enough to accept this
- Then we are not burdened with the 'worlds' evaluation of us
- Including our own evaluation of ourselves

That is why Paul says

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will".*

Our values and thoughts should be being renewed to be in line with God's

- It is then when we can value ourselves and others in a fair and honest way
- We can see and value the gift each of us brings
- And be content with the gifts God has given us
- And appreciate the gifts that others have.
- We can function like a body

If we are focussed on God

- And derive our strength from Him
- Then our actions are less likely to be determined by what others do to us
- Verse 17 says *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right"*
- Similarly verse 19 tells us  
*Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

This is what Jesus was talking about when he told us to 'turn the other cheek' (Matt 5:39)

- He is not advocating we allow abuse to carry on unchallenged
- But we should not be controlled by our abuser.
- Our actions should be a result of our faith in God
- Not a reaction to evil
- Or as Paul puts in in Romans 12:21
- *"Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."*

There is another aspect to this

- The idea of walking with God
- This implies a level of relationship.
- A sense of sharing our lives with God

I enjoy walking

- I think many of us do
- I know when my children were young, If I was not at work,
- I would walk them to school
- It was brilliant.



They were always happy Daddy was there and we would have wonderful conversations

- They would chat away about everything and nothing
- Far more so than if we were sitting at home.

That is the sense I get with this verse

- God wants us to walk with our heavenly father
- Talk to him about everything and nothing.
- Just enjoy his company and follow his leading

Humbly, of course, God is a holy God

- It is only by his mercy we can come into his presence at all
- But he desires we walk humbly with Him

### **Conclusion**

Justice, Mercy and Humility

- All attributes of God
- All attributes he desires in us.
- All attributes that would make society a better place.

When faced with injustice, hurt, anger and pride

- It is not enough to say we are not part of the problem
- We need to be part of the solution
- And that includes being humble enough to seek God
- And, to treat others with respect

God tells us in 2 Chronicles 7:14

*if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Here the word used for humble is to bend the knee

- A sign of honour and respect
- An acknowledgement of authority and worthiness
- An act of submission and obedience
- As we read in the beginning
- Our attitude should be like that of Jesus, who humbled himself and was obedient

**Amen**

### **Communion**

Let us join together in an act of communion

- This is an act of remembrance
- An act of promise
- And an act of obedience

Paul writes to the Church in Corinth, saying

*“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”<sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*

*<sup>27</sup> So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.*

1 Corinthians 11:23-29

So, let us come to God humbly,

- Examine ourselves, check our attitude towards Him and others
- Repent of any pride or unforgiveness
- Acknowledge the debt he paid for us
- We depend totally on him for our salvation and our life

Jesus broke the bread and said “This is my body given for you”

- Let’s take and eat with grateful hearts

He then took the cup and said

- “This is my blood, the new promise of a relationship with me”
- Let’s drink humbly

## **Prayer**

## **Blessing:**

**Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with us all and for ever more. Amen**