

It is so good to be back with you this morning, and whilst COVID has tried to dampen my spirits, it cannot deflate me from the incredible blessing that I have experienced over these last 2 weeks in Nairobi. I'm not going to provide an in-depth presentation of my CMSi visit but I pray with the reading of Micah 6 it will help us to consider the priorities that are in God's heart for his Church. Now it was only 2 Sundays ago that I was asked to preach in Antony's church in which his pastor told me to preach for 1 hour. I promise this is not something I plan to bring home from Kenya.

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I think what we all at times recognize is that life is not fair. And when you are placed in a different context – Africa – where you see poverty at a completely different scale – you appreciate all you have and recognize what others don't have.

So I was invited to visit our mission partners in Nairobi Kenya, and in particular within an area that is called Soweto – this is where Antony Njoroge, Louise Githire and others serve. [Slides 2-6] The scale of the area houses approximately 70-80,000 people. They live in what is called an informal settlement. Approximately 30 years ago, Antony's mum Lucy lived in another part of Nairobi and without any prior notice, the government came with bulldozers and displaced thousands and thousands of homes – partly to clean the city up. Those people, including Lucy and Antony were given a new plot of land in what is now Soweto. They had absolutely nothing – no home, no water, no shelter, nothing – just a small piece of land. And from there, they and many others rebuilt their lives.

30 years later things are no different - Discrimination and bias of every form happens. [Slide 7] I have seen one part of Nairobi where the rich enjoy beautifully manicured lawns and big houses, [Slide 8] and then I have been inside homes in Soweto made of corrugated iron where there is literally only room for 1 bed, 1 light, providing shelter for a mother and her 3 children, no windows, a toilet shared between 9 other families, where each person will only get 1 meal a day. Life isn't fair! But we as God's people must declare that in the Kingdom of God it will be fair.

As I moved around Soweto I kept asking God for justice, and I would guess that there has been times when you have wanted justice... maybe from what you've seen on the news.

We know God cares about fairness and justice because that is the ultimate realization of Christ's Kingdom Rule. We can be reminded of this in Isaiah 9 where the prophet tells of Christ's coming - [Slide 9] "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity."

[Slide 10] Jesus came and he fulfilled this. He came to proclaim Good News to the poor, to proclaim the release of the captives and the oppressed, and give sight to the blind. And it's in these promises that having walked with Antony, his mum Lucy, Louise, Isabelle and others within the Tujisaidie Community that I am able to declare there is real hope.

God cares about fairness and justice and our text today is a powerful witness to that truth. So what does the Lord require of each of us in an unfair world? [Slide 11] "That you do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God."

In our reading we see that God was not happy with his people:

I. Firstly, at the very root of God's displeasure with his people was their unfair and unjust practices. He declares in this chapter that

- The homes of the wicked are filled with treasures by cheating.
- They are guilty of the practice of measuring with dishonest measures... cheating.
- The rich had become wealthy unjustly.

This was not some isolated case... this was systemic throughout their culture!

[Slide 12] Kenya as a country is full of churches, and as I have joined 2 on my visit I have seen a people, who although they have nothing, and receive very little support from the Government, they still love the Lord and thank him for his provision. They reflect their thankfulness in their praise, it is reflected in their giving to the Lord even though they have so little, and it is demonstrated that although many have so little they are rich in their devotion to the Lord. And yet I've heard stories of a government that is corrupt – and this affects education, infrastructure, welfare, and health. Here's a picture of the [Slide 13 - 14] – it's a place like Speakers Corner where people have a chance to speak about anything, and yet the government use these as opportunities to promise much to the people in order to get the votes that they need. In the Tujisaidie Community is a school that Lucy, Isabelle and Louise support. It is run by this man [Slide 15-19], John Omondi – a very loving and devoted follower of the Lord. He has 13 teachers working for him, and yet all those teachers cannot be paid the typical wage because John doesn't have the money. In fact he has 300 children in the school and receives no financial support from the Kenyan government. The school was built through the community and the help of CMS – nothing came from the Government. Each class room has a blackboard and that's it. Whilst there are some text books, there's not enough for all kids, there's no computers, no internet, nothing. John ensures through the support of CMSi to provide a meal each lunchtime for every child in his care because without it these kids would have no nutrition. And yet even though the Government give the school nothing, they still have come on inspections and threatened at one stage to close the school down. It seems so unfair. And yet, John with an incredibly large heart, knows every child by name, he loves each one. Every day they learn, they worship, they pray, they love the Lord, and I believe as they grow they are going to bring about a spiritual transformation into the community around them.

[Slide 20-21] And so at the weekend when these children don't have school to go to, Antony in the Tumaini foundation steps in and ensures that those kids, and many other families get a meal, and if there are any other needs the Tujisaidie community group will ensure they are supported.

It reminds me of what John the Baptist said to the crowd in Luke 3 - "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." To corrupt tax collectors he said, "You can live out your faith by collecting no more taxes than required." To some others he said, "Don't extort from others and don't bully people."

What I have seen over these last few weeks in Tujisaidie and also in Tumaini is a Christ-like faith that journeys into the daily lives and relationships of many. It's the reality behind the words of Micah 6:8 – to "Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God." [Micah 6:8](#)

What I have seen demonstrated in this community of Soweto is that God has not abandoned these people ... God cares about justice and mercy.

And so Micah the prophet declares :

### **1. Do Justice**

In other words, Do things right and do the right things!

One of the major projects coming along for the Tujjsaidie community is to provide additional classrooms in the school, and this will require a new building. [Slide 22] Currently when pupils reach the age of 15 they sit an exam which if they pass will allow them to enter into higher education for a few years. However if a child doesn't pass the exam, there is no alternative but that they go back into the Soweto community. They have no employment, no real hope, and many girls end up pregnant or the boys become involved in crime. So the extra classrooms will allow the headmaster John to offer further education to those kids in this situation. Again the Kenyan Government don't seem to care, so there will be no funding coming to help with this. Do you know that all this school needs to raise for the building work is about £12,000 Therefore that's why it is so important to do the right thing and help address this need. Do justice. [Slide 23] As a church we sent over many pairs of school shoes from our School uniform scheme and offered them into the school. On the first day of my visit, I saw children coming into school with an elastic band round their tattered shoes to hold them together, and therefore it was a great joy to address such a basic need in such a simple way. It is about doing justice. [Slide 24-25] The library that Antony is developing in Tumaini gives these young people and many other schools in Soweto a chance to learn more and gain knowledge. It seems so unfair that these children don't get the chance to have a proper education and get a foot on the ladder. And as they come into Tumaini the pastoral care from Antony and his team begins. I have so many stories about this transformation taking place.

[Slide 26] You see God cares for everyone because in him he knows that these young people have a purpose. God cares about the disabled and disenfranchised. God cares about people locked away in prison. God cares about human trafficking. God cares about all the people who are adversely affected in our broken world.

We don't have to go to Africa to see injustice – it's on a very doorsteps. So how do we demonstrate this fight against injustice in our own lives?

[Slide 27] Basil the Great was a theologian who lived in what we now know as modern day Turkey. Basil the Great wrote, "The bread you do not use is the bread of the hungry. The garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of the person who is naked. The shoes you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot. The money you keep locked way (in other words your bank accounts) is the money of the poor."

Folks those are challenging words that will go deep into the heart of each of our consciences. Doing justice is doing things right and doing the right things.

## **2. The next bit of our verse 8 is to Love Mercy or Kindness**

Have you ever wondered about the combination of those two words? Micah did not say, “be merciful” or “do mercy.” He said “love mercy,” which for me means taking mercy into yourself and embracing it. It means loving the opportunity show deep kindness and warmth to others, no matter who they are.

On our final Saturday in the community we stood with mothers and children as they waited to be served their meal through Antony’s More than Just A Meal Programme. [Slide 28] I watched as children walked in with whatever bowl or empty carton they had to collect the cooked rice and lentils. But I got chatting to one little girl. The queue was almost gone, and the adults began to queue to get whatever was left over. The little girl told me that she had no plate or carton to get food. I asked her when she had last ate, and she said the previous day. It just couldn’t be that way – it had to be sorted. So I took her inside and we found a plate and a spoon so that we could get food into her hands. To see a child without food is so wrong, and to know that Antony’s kindness provides some hope is encouraging. I know that on that particular day, there were more kids who didn’t get, and so I remember sitting in his mum’s house finishing off our lunch when he got the call – we quickly took all the remaining pots and ran up to Tumaini so that these kids were able to eat – it was cabbage, rice and potatoes, but it makes all the difference. Antony could have left it but I saw in him that desire to love mercy.

## **3. So then we finally come to walking Humbly with God**

I found out this week that the word that is so often translated as “humbly” in Micah 6:8 is an interesting word, in the original Hebrew. It seems that this particular word is used only once in all of Scripture, right here in Micah 6, making it difficult to translate it into English in a way that expresses its meaning in full. When we hear the word “humbly,” we often think that to be humble means to be self-deprecating. To be humble is an accurate view of one’s self, a view that is not inflated. To walk humbly with God is to recognize that our lives are informed not by the world, but by God and how God requires us to live. Some commentators have suggested that a better translation would read, “to walk wisely” or simply “to walk.” The emphasis here is on walking rightly with God, from which justice and kindness and mercy flows. God therefore wants us to be allow him in so that he shapes our actions.

I love what Spurgeon said about these words. [Slide 29] ‘Humble walking with God signifies, first, a perception of God’s Being and Presence. We must distinctly recognize that there is a God and that He is near us— that He is real and true and that we are living in actual nearness to Him.’

He goes on, ‘We are to walk with Him and this cannot be done unless we know that He is near. How many live as if God were a nonentity, a dream, a theological fable, a respectable fancy and no more? But the acceptable character is made and formed mainly by the fact that God is and that God surrounds us.’

I will admit that the visit to Nairobi showed me another level of how people walk so closely with God each and every day, how much they depend on him, and how they are constantly directed by him and not other thoughts. As we chatted with Lucy and Louise about a number of ways to help the community through the money raised, it became so clear that these people are not driven by the need for more money to fix problems. They are incredibly wise to humbly walk and seek after the Lord. It was truly astonishing to see how at every step in our day, the people around us called for the Lord to be near. Everything was surrounded in prayer. Even the tone of their

voices changed completely when they prayed, they became quieter – it demonstrated the humility that we are talking about here. And this has been I think the bedrock, the foundation for everything that goes on. [Slide 30] We had the privilege of meeting a group of elderly women called the Gacucu (which means little grandmothers). These are the women, who were displaced 30 years ago from their homes. They gather twice a month to seek the Lord and to discuss the future plans for the community. What I noticed most was the way in which their focus, their attention was all on the Lord.

It reminds me of what the Lord said to Abraham, “Walk before Me and be perfect”. These people have shown this.

[Slide 31] As I’ve recounted a little of my experiences in Nairobi, you will no doubt gauge the incredible impact it has had on me personally. It will be very hard to forget it, but I believe anyone who sees what Antony, Isabelle, Louise, Lucy and John do each day can see the words of Micah 6:8 resonating.

You may have heard of Rick Warren, the former minister of Saddleback Church and his series of books on a Purpose Driven Life. Well in 2006 Fox News aired a television special entitled, “Can Rick Warren Change the World?” In the interview they pressed Rick Warren on The Purpose Driven Life, the ministry of Saddleback Church and his global efforts to create a network to combat poverty, disease, illiteracy, spiritual emptiness and corrupt egocentric leadership.

All through the interview was the nagging question, “Can you really heal all the hurts of the world?” We might add, “Can you really create a culture of compassion and justice and mercy in the world for all those for whom life is not just or fair?”

Toward the end of the interview Rick Warren said, “There are four words I want etched on my tombstone when I die. Those four words are, “At least he tried.”

[Slide 32] Perhaps our four words will be that ‘At least I tried, at least we tried’. I pray that in the months and years ahead as we grow in our partnership with CMS Ireland, and with the community of Tujisaidie and Tumaini, we would see God’s hand guiding us and reminding us of what he requires of us, not just in Nairobi, but in every day of our lives here that at least we try - To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.