



Dear friends,

Two of us have come back into the office this morning (Monday) after a period of leave, and observed together that it feels as though the whole world has tilted again in the few short days we have been apart. Hot on the heels of the practical, emotional and spiritual work of Covid-19 comes news of war in Ukraine...and the question again is what can we, should we, must we do in the face of this new situation. Where do our priorities lie? Those of us who are able may have been working out over this weekend how we can most effectively make gifts of money or goods to those in need...many of us will have prayed, alone, or in company.

I write this against the backdrop of preparing for a Circuit Meeting at which we will discuss significant changes for the work of our Circuit, and as I think about the first of our new monthly lunchtime prayer services at Wesley Road Chapel. Also as Methodism is asking itself '***What does it mean for the Methodist Church to [continue to] be a justice-seeking church?***' and when some of us will be '***Embracing Justice***' as we read Isabelle Hamley's book through Lent.

It concerns me very much that many of us might feel as though we are being asked (again?) to do yet more with still less. This doesn't sound like life shaped by the God I know, love and serve...

I am currently captivated by a book called '*Romans Disarmed: Resisting empire/demanding justice*'. It might not be everyone's cup of tea, but the authors are challenging me to think differently about scripture and about the world... and I am beginning to wonder if 'no choice but to do more and more with less and less' doesn't sound much more like worldly empire than the kingdom of heaven.

I wonder if our call to live justly, and to participate in God's intention for the life of the world, demands that we allow enough space in our lives for the unexpected call to love, as well as those things we might plan for. I believe, in an upside-down kingdom kind of way, it might require us to do less than our available resources might suggest, exactly so that there can be 'holy gaps' – time budgeted to be given away... space to listen, to feel and to act.

This means we will have to make choices about our resource of time, both individually and communally, just as we do about our resources of money and material gifts. This is hard. Especially as we know there are things we must do as we live out our discipleship in a particular legal and organisational framework. I don't have all the answers, but I do know that the conversation is essential.

As we read Micah's words again...I wonder what our 'thousands of rams', and 'rivers of oil' might be? What is God **not** asking of us, in order that we might do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God? In order that we, and those we love and care for, might flourish?

<sup>6</sup> 'With what shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
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 tens of thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'

<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6-8

Peace, Jo

Walking with Micah: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/social-justice/walking-with-micah/>