

What does the Lord require of us? Just this . . . to do justice . . . to love kindness . . . and to walk humbly with our God.

Simple. Right?

I want you to take a look at your first finger . . . the index finger. If you are able, straighten it out . . . then bend it slowly . . . and straighten it again.

Simple. Right?

For most people it *is* a simple action . . . it requires no thought . . . no planning . . . no training . . . it's simple . . . until you can't do it!

And suddenly you realise the process of simply bending and straightening a finger is anything but simple. It starts in the brain . . . the primary motor cortex of the brain sends an electrical signal which travels down the spinal cord and through the peripheral nerves to specific muscles in the hand. When the electrical signal reaches the muscles it travels to a neuromuscular junction where the nerve releases a chemical called acetylchorine which tells the muscle fibres to contract. When the muscles contract they pull on tendons that run through the hand to the fingers and the finger bends . . . or straightens . . . and it all happens in a millisecond.

Simple! And, blessed are those who *don't* have to think about it . . . for whom it just happens.

What does the Lord require of us? Well, it's simple. We are to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.

So, what are you doing here? Shouldn't you be getting on with it? Simply doing justice, being kind and humble! What are *we* doing here? With these rituals and routines . . . with our prayers and praises . . . with our rosters and rote-learned creeds?

You know, for us to do what we are doing this morning someone had to get here early to open up this building. A couple of people cleaned it during the week. Someone else arranged the flowers and made sure the paraments were the right colour. Another person set up the communion vessels. Different people made sure tea and coffee supplies were adequate. There were people to welcome at the door and someone on Powerpoint, and another person on the sound desk, and some musicians. Someone read the Bible readings and someone wrote the prayers, and a few other people will help with communion distribution, and someone prepared a children's address, and someone else organized activities for Bible Detectives and 36s. Someone prepared the Powerpoint slides and someone printed bulletins, and someone will lock the doors and turn off the lights when we leave, and all of this was coordinated by someone who put together a roster. And, I spent many hours planning the service and many more hours writing this sermon, and for what? What's this whole complex structure and organization for?

And, if that wasn't a rhetorical question, perhaps someone would be brave enough to pipe up and say: "For God. We're doing it for God. We're worshipping God!"

Well, that's a nice thought, except God doesn't need our worship. God doesn't require this of us! We don't have to impress God with our singing and prayers and confessions of faith. I don't stand here for God's sake. What *does* God require of us? To do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with him. And, even that's not for his sake . . . but for the sake of the world . . . for the good of friends and strangers and neighbours.

So, what are we doing here? Well, the simple answer is, we are here because we *don't* do what God requires of us . . . or, we don't do it often enough . . . we don't do justice, we don't act kindly, and we don't walk humbly. And, if you need evidence of that just turn on the television news!

So, God gathers us together . . . God gathers people together in places like this all over the world . . . not so we can impress him with our goodness, but so he can impress on us his goodness . . . and justice . . . and kindness . . . and humility . . . in and through his son, Jesus.

What happens here is *Divine* service . . . God's service to us. Because, as you might have noticed, although it sounds simple, doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God are not so simple for people who by nature are selfish and proud, fearful and stubborn, parochial and inward-looking. Yep, that's you and me, I'm afraid.

So, this whole complex system of rosters and rituals and confessions and creeds is not for God's sake, it's for *our* sake. It's God's way of getting to us . . . of getting *through* to us . . . getting through the complexities and entanglement of the baggage we lug around, and the hurts we carry, and the shame and guilt we bear from being sinful human beings.

You know, things must have been so much simpler for God before he created human beings! But, even after he created Adam and Eve that must have seemed like a walk in the park compared to becoming a human being himself! Talk about complex . . . God becoming one of us! But, that's what he did . . . to make what is impossible, possible. To make what is complex, simple again. Jesus humbled himself in order to do what God requires of us . . . to do what God requires of human beings. Jesus acted justly and kindly, and with humility he walked with God . . . even to the point of death . . . and along every step of the way . . . every step . . . he didn't think of himself, he thought of others.

And, having been raised from the dead Jesus keeps on doing that. Coming to us in simple things like bread and wine, and water and word. Coming to us with forgiveness . . . making us right with God. Coming to us with healing, assuring us that we are somebody, just as we are. Coming to us with grace, giving us a reason to trust not in ourselves, but in God's goodness. Coming to us with compassion, giving us the confidence to throw off the baggage of shame and guilt that makes timid and fearful.

And, it happens here . . . in this divine service . . . and not just once, but again and again . . . God gathers us so he can get through to us . . . and God sends us out forgiven, renewed and blessed so that, slowly but surely, more and more, we *would* do justice . . . we would love kindness, and we would walk humbly with God. Not for God's sake, but for the sake of the people around us.

If you are like me – and I suspect you are – this will take a life-time, but little by little, Jesus gets through . . . and the more Jesus gets through to us the more we do justice, the more we act with kindness and the closer we walk with God . . . and one day we will do it without even thinking about it . . . one day we'll do it without even knowing we are doing it.

One day it *will* be simple.

Amen.

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Epiphany 4, 2026