

Lectionary readings: Micah 6: 1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31; Matthew 5: 1-12

For reflection and prayer

- **Micah 6:** God's people are guilty for they have turned away from God. They have forgotten all that God has done for them in the past. They could try to 'appease' God by offering sacrifices, even sacrificing their first-born child. Do we remember with gratitude all that God has been to us and all that He has done for us? Do we try to 'appease' God by coming to church etc? If so, we have totally misunderstood who God is and what He requires of us. The God we worship is a God of love who accepts us as we are but challenges us to be all that we can be by His grace. What is it that God requires, asks the prophet? The answer - *'Do what is fair and just to your neighbour, be compassionate and loyal in your love and ... take God seriously.'* (The Message) What does it mean to take God seriously?
- **Psalm 15:** I love this Psalm in 'Psalms for Praying': *'O Beloved, whom will you invite into the abode of your Heart? Who will dwell with you in Love? One who walks with integrity, who is in harmony with Your Word, and sings the heart's song; whose tongue speaks truth judging not others and seeking only the good; whose eyes behold not the outer garments of the body, but see within the inner robe of Love; whose own weaknesses are acknowledged and brought to light in prayer; who is just in all affairs of life and takes not advantage of another. One who does all these things will join the Dance of Life, will sing the Song of Joy.'*

- **1 Corinthians 1:** In the society of Paul's day the Good News of Jesus Christ was utter foolishness. Nothing much has changed, has it? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is so counter-cultural that our society doesn't get it. Perhaps we don't either? We are dealing with something which is well beyond our understanding and knowledge, but we can open ourselves to the wisdom of God and experience a mysterious power in Jesus that can transform our lives. Paul says in verse 24 (The Message): *'Christ is God's ultimate miracle and wisdom wrapped up in one.'*
- **Matthew 5:** If anything is counter-cultural, it is the Beatitudes. They turn our ideas and values upside down. We are blessed by God when we are in dire straits, when we are mourning, when we know gentleness and humility, when we are hungry for justice, when we are forgiving and merciful, when we are pure in heart and see God everywhere, when we plant peace wherever we go, when we are so aligned with God that we are willing to suffer for remaining true and close to God. These are not the values that are held dear in our society today.

A prayer

Gentle me, Holy One, into an unclenched moment, a deep breath, a letting go of heavy expectancies, of shrivelling anxieties, of dead certainties, that, softened by the silence, surrounded by the light and open to the Mystery, I may be found by wholeness, upheld by the unfathomable, entranced by the simple and filled with the joy that is You. (Ted Loder)

Disturb me, Lord, until I desire to take on a more holy and human shape.