



UnitingWorld Sunday Sermon Transcript 2024

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Christian Evangelical Church in Timor (GMIT), Indonesia

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Dear sisters and brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, greetings of peace to all of you from us at the Evangelical Christian Church in West Timor [GMIT], located in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. We are grateful for the long-standing partnership between our two churches, GMIT and the Uniting Church of Australia. We glorify God who allows our two churches to support each other as fellowship of faith, across nations and continents, including through service at the *Tanaoba Lais Manekat* Foundation, the TLM, which is one of GMIT's [community] service units.

Sisters and brothers, last April 2021, in the midst of the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of our church's ministry areas were hit by a severe cyclone, called Seroja, which claimed the lives of hundreds of people, destroying houses and public facilities, and sources of community livelihood.

During the emergency response period, our church worked hand in hand with national and local governments, and also with international bodies, including Uniting World, providing assistance to those most exposed to the great disaster.

At our church, GMIT, the biblical text of Micah 6:8 resonates strongly, especially as we grapple with the vulnerability of the poor and the impacts of climate change.

"O people, you have been told what is good. And what does the LORD require of you, but to do justice, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

A number of Bible scholars say that the prophet Micah served approximately 20 to 25 years, when Israel and Judah were in a time of political instability, social injustice and disloyalty to God.



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Therefore, he talks about the three virtues of faith:

- to do justice,
- love faithfulness, and
- walk humbly with God.

In West Timor, we read the message of the prophet in the context of the threat of climate change and the vulnerability of poor families and their struggle for fullness of life in God's grace.

First is about doing justice. The concept of *mishpat* [justice] in the Old Testament, is primarily about maintaining right relationships with others. Humans must not take too much for themselves and ignore others who are mired in poverty due to the unfair system. So we see justice that must not only be understood as social justice, but also justice towards the natural environment, namely not exploiting nature without limits and destroying God's creation. The opposite of doing justice is greed, selfishness, taking more than what we need from others and from the earth.

The second point is about loving kindness. The concept of *khesed* in Hebrew is related to sincerity, to be friends with one another, being in reciprocal relationships, in solidarity and mutual cooperation. In the context of a society where many poor families are trapped in human trafficking, malnutrition and stunting, *khesed* means being willing to work with various elements of the nation, supporting the vulnerable ones to live with dignity in the abundance of God's love.

Sisters and brothers, God's kindness also makes it possible for humans across races and nations to be connected to one another in bonds of reciprocal love, without anyone feeling superior or inferior to others. Studies related to climate justice show that all humans on this planet, including you in Australia and us in West Timor, need each other to preserve the earth. No matter which continent we are on, we all have the same responsibility to care for the earth as our common home.

The third point of our text is about is about humility, walk humbly with your God. Humans often forget God and feel they can do anything without God. The prophet's call is increasingly relevant for us today. Modern humans can feel like they no longer need God in their lives. Humility before God must also be reflected in our humble attitude towards each other and towards the universe. Without humans, nature can still exist. But without nature, it is impossible for humans to survive.

Therefore, do justice, love faithfulness, and walk humbly with your God. Amen.