

### Call to Worship

God cares for us with a compassion that knows no bounds.

*May our compassion for those in need, overflow freely.*

God cares for all his creation, with a justice that shows no favouritism.

*May we be dedicated and fervent in challenging all injustice, and being an ally for those who are its victims.*

### Opening Prayer

Lord of all, we come before you in praise and adoration. Only you are worthy to receive true praise. Praise for the wonder of creation. Praise for the gift of life. Praise for your encouragement to live to the fullest. Praise for the way Christ walked on earth to live out your love. praise for the grace granted to us as your Spirit was freely bestowed upon us.

We pray that as we come to you in worship, our praise may be joined with the company of all your family, on earth and in heaven.

Amen

**Hymn:** STF 693 Beauty for brokenness. If you are able to get access to YouTube, there is a very powerful video of this wonderful hymn: - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxfBh9ay8gE>

Beauty for brokenness,  
hope for despair,  
Lord, in your suffering world  
this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children,  
justice, joy, peace,  
sunrise to sunset,  
your kingdom increase!

Rest for the ravaged earth,  
oceans and streams  
plundered and poisoned –  
our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness,  
carelessness, greed;  
make us content with  
the things that we need.

Shelter for fragile lives,  
cures for their ills,  
work for all people,  
trade for their skills;  
land for the dispossessed,  
rights for the weak,  
voices to plead the cause  
of those who can't speak.

God of the poor...  
God of the poor,  
friend of the weak;  
give us compassion we pray:  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain;  
come, change our love  
from a spark to a flame.

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Lighten our darkness,  
breathe on this flame  
until your justice burns  
brightly again;  
until the nations  
learn of your ways,  
seek your salvation  
and bring you their praise

Refuge from cruel wars,  
havens from fear,  
cities for sanctuary,  
freedoms to share.  
Peace to the killing-fields,  
scorched earth to green,  
Christ for the bitterness,  
his cross for the pain.

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**Scripture**      **Luke 13:10-17: Jesus lives out his care in both compassion and justice**

**Sermon**

When Jesus had been driven into the desert to fast and pray after his baptism, he was confronted by a number of choices about the nature of the ministry he was about to embark on. Hungry as he was whilst he fasted, he was offered the chance to turn the stones into bread. Not only would this stave off the pangs of hunger, but it would allow him to meet the needs of so many people facing starvation and poverty. Jesus chose to reject the way of instant satisfaction in order to pave the way for a greater good – to show the way of justice for all.

When he was anointed by Mary with an expensive perfume, Judas was very clear that the proceeds should have been used to feed the poor, but Jesus told Judas to stop complaining about such an act of devotion and both the acceptance of and preparation for his coming death.

Elsewhere in his ministry, time after time, Jesus is filled with compassion and responds with love and compassion to those who are hurting.

When Jesus has been teaching the large crowd who have gathered to hear his authoritative word, he recognises that they not only have a need for spiritual food, but also are hungry as they hang on to his every word. His disciples see this need as insurmountable, but Jesus, in his compassion for the crowd, finds a way to meet their need, so they are fed to overflowing.

The passage from Luke 13:10 set for today is just one of those many occasions when Jesus sees the need of someone who is hurting badly, and responds to bring healing, wholeness, and a sense of worth to those whom everyone else ignored and kept on the margins.

For 18 years, this woman had carried the pain of the spirit which had crippled her. The leader of the synagogue only saw that the rules of society were being broken, as if he had never understood or cared about her pain. He did not see the injustice, the pain or the hurt – he just saw the rules.

When Jesus healed a blind man, the authorities accused him of working for the devil, but the man himself was adamant – one thing I know – once I was blind, but now I see. The debilitating blindness was gone as Jesus responded with compassion and kindness.

There are so many more instances in which Jesus meets someone, recognises their need and meets that need in an appropriate way for that individual – with no concern for the wider consequences. The need is there in front of him, so he responds.

In our society today, we regularly see new situations in which people are hurting, and in growing need of solutions which lighten the burden of that pain – solutions in which the light of hope can shine through the darkness. The rising energy costs – feeding throughout the economy to crisis levels – placing more people into the tough decision of eating or heating. More families than ever are turning to food banks. The threat looms ever-larger for the autumn and winter.

Those of us who went to the Ipswich Cost of Living Summit, heard how churches working ***Together for Ipswich*** are seeking to respond to this growing need with the same compassion that Jesus showed in so many of his encounters. The need is great – it is before our eyes, and unlike the leader of that synagogue, so many groups are finding ways to respond through Top-up shops, Wellbeing cafes, safe harbour spaces, financial advice centres. A whole variety of safe places. Discussion is underway for Winter Warmers – ways of providing a daily warm refuge where people can gather for companionship, care and warmth.

Our discipleship calls on us to live out God's care through compassion to those in immediate need, just as Jesus did.

But if I take you back to my opening thought – in his temptation, Jesus did not give in to the siren call of instant gratification, or see the burden of pain and need before him as the only priority.

When the lepers met Jesus – he healed them and sent them to the priest who could declare them healed, so that they could re-join society. When the haemorrhaging woman had the faith to touch his coat for healing, Jesus called her out so that others could know she had been healed. In today's passage, not only did Jesus heal the crippled woman, but he then turned round to the authorities and challenged them outright on their lack of

compassion, their callous disregard for the needs of this woman, who placed their rules above her suffering. In so doing, he turned God's care not just into compassion, but into justice.

When you read Luke's gospel, not just in bite-sized snippets, but as you see the story unfold, you see time and again how Jesus takes a moment similar to this encounter in the synagogue, and responds with compassion to the individual, but also makes a stand for justice by challenging the way the authorities exercise power to their own advantage, rather than seeing their power as a vehicle for them to use to make a stand for justice.

In our climate justice campaign, we recognised that we have to **learn**, we must **act** on that learning, **speak out** in advocacy for justice, and always do so by **inspiring hope**. This fourfold cycle sits at the heart of all aspects of our discipleship. In our care, we must act out of compassion to meet today's need, but we must also speak out in advocacy for justice. Just as the Ipswich churches are working Together to alleviate the cost of Living crisis through our compassion, we have also begun to focus on the need to use our collective might to speak out for justice. This is just as much our call to discipleship to challenge the complacency of those in power, showing callous disregard for the poor, the marginalised. The current crisis need more than compassion to those becoming more deeply embroiled in the pain and suffering. It needs a demanding call for policy reform placing justice for the marginalised and forgotten at the heart of decisions. God's care demand both compassion and justice. As disciples, we are called to stand for justice in all its guises, to inspire hope, alongside our compassionate actions.

### Prayers

We pray for all those places in the world where there is division, enmity hatred and violence. For the victims, and those who wield their power indiscriminately. Thinking especially of Ukraine, Russia, Taiwan, Sri Lanka.

We pray for those who have been affected by the extreme weather in so many parts of the world – may we recognise this as climate change in action, and be prepared to make a lighter touch on the world.

We pray for the political tensions and splits infecting our nation, and those preparing for leadership – may all leaders show compassion and justice.

*In silent prayer now, lift up your concerns for those who are facing their own crisis – pray that they may receive the care and compassion they need. Share also your aspirations and hopes for a world in which injustice is defeated, and everyone is an active member of an equal, fair and caring society, without reservation or barrier....*

### Our Father ...

**Hymn 713 Show me How to Stand for Justice, Martin Leckebusch** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8CIU66oFMQ>

Show me how to stand for justice:  
how to work for what is right,  
how to challenge false assumptions,  
how to walk within the light.  
May I learn to share more freely  
in a world so full of greed,  
showing your immense compassion  
by the life I choose to lead.

Gladly I embrace...  
Gladly I embrace a lifestyle  
modelled on your living word,  
in humility submitting  
to the truth which I have heard.  
Make me conscious of your presence  
every day, in all I do:  
by your Spirit's gracious prompting  
may I learn to walk with you.

Teach my heart...  
Teach my heart to treasure mercy,  
whether given or received-  
for my need has not diminished  
since the day I first believed:  
let me seek no satisfaction  
boasting of what I have done,  
but rejoice that I am pardoned  
and accepted in your Son.

**Martin E Leckebusch © Kevin Mayhew Ltd**

### Blessing:

Praise and glory, and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength are due to God alone – the God who grants us the rite to inherit the Kingdom of justice and peace and love. Be enriched and enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit as you seek to live out your calling through your compassion and your stance for justice.