



Jesus' Vision of Justice

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." — Margaret Mead

The average size church in the United Church of Christ is small: worshipping with 30 people. Many small churches have big dreams about what God is calling us to do and who God is calling us to be. We desire to change the world. We are small groups of thoughtful, committed people. We are preparing ourselves for the next chapter in the story God is still speaking into being.

In January I went on retreat as part of a clergy renewal program to provide pastors with time and space to further develop our relationship with God. This program is hosted by the Benedictine sisters of Holy Wisdom Monastery in Madison, Wisconsin. They are a small group of thoughtful, committed sisters, changing the world. Sound familiar?

The sisters caught the attention of the New York Times, and in September of 2025 were a feature story. The NYT's story begins this way: "The prairie sisters of Wisconsin would never call themselves renegades. Not in their decision to open their Roman Catholic community to Protestants. And not in their decades-long work restoring 170 acres around their monastery to ecological health, transforming lawns and farm fields into thriving oak savanna and native prairie that is riotous with wildflowers and grasses, insects, rabbits and birds. The sisters of Holy Wisdom Monastery outside Madison, Wisc., say these actions



fulfill their highest calling: [to welcome all people and care for the Earth as a sacred place.](#)"

The sisters are showing us what it means to catch the vision of Jesus for today. The sisters have a heart for the local church and for pastors. They know that to sustain the work of justice, we must also sustain spiritual vitality. Amid the suffering in our communities, related to the work of justice, local church pastors and members of congregations are finding ways to follow the prophet Micah's instructions: to do justice, show kindness, and walk humbly (Micah 6:8) amidst the chaos. Pastors across the country are finding ways to minister amidst communities torn apart by a divided country filled with political and economic strife. Pastors and their people are tired. We all need ways to find rest and renewal. We are human, after all. We are not machines or robots. We all need to find ways to restore our spirits.

The prophet Micah reminds us of our purpose in this life and Jesus shows us how to minister with justice, kindness, and humility. Jesus' life and ministry focused on doing justice for the orphan, the widow, the hungry, the imprisoned, the outcast, the immigrant, and the poor. Jesus showed loving kindness to children and to the aging, to sinners, to the rich and to Creation. Jesus walked humbly among us, showing us the way to shape our lives doing justice and loving kindness.

I cannot think of a better way to shape a life today on this Earth than by these commitments to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly. Our world is under siege by people whose idea of justice is corrupted, who believe kindness is weakness, and who think walking humbly is the opposite of power. Why do justice when you can abolish the justice system of accountability? Why love kindness when fear and terror get the results you want faster? Why walk humbly through the rose garden when you can pave it over with cement for parties with the rich? What kind of Jesus prioritizes the poor when you can have a Jesus that bows down to a rich king?

Looking at the whole of the Bible, especially at the prophets of the Old Testament, we see the vision of Jesus unfold. The Jesus of the prophets is a Jesus with a vision for justice based on the value of compassion for the oppressed. Sister Lynne, who is the head of Holy Wisdom Monastery, says, “we need to remember what it is to be human, remember that basically, inside of us, the best of us is kind and generous and compassionate.” The sisters have grasped Jesus’ vision of justice. And it is simple and it can be carried out by a small group of people. This vision of compassionate justice has the power to still change the world.

May God continue to give all of us strength to follow Jesus’ vision of justice and to be bold as we dream about our future. May we find time and space for rest and renewal. May we show compassion and kindness to one another, especially when we grow weary. We were never meant to do ministry alone. Together, let’s do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

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