

Our sermon this morning is from the prophecy of Micah, and we will focus on chapter 6:6-8 which was read to us earlier. This passage changed my life one time when I studied it and saw the value of being kind to others as a Christian in this busy world, of self - reliance and hard work, and how it portrays our real identity as “children of God”, destined for eternity. It has very key teaching to the church. But we need to dig a bit into history, to know the context in which Micah was during his term in the “office of the prophet”.

- Micah served as a prophet during the reign of kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (750-700BC).
- He was from the Southern Kingdom (Judah), but his message was for both Kingdoms of Israel.

During his time, there was a great influx of wealth in Israel after a long period of peace in both Kingdoms leading to an increasing number of social evils.

- At this point the whole Israel (both Northern and southern Kingdoms) was wicked, in the sense that there was oppression of the poor (Ch 2&3), and religious practices were unpleasing to God (6:6b-7).
- They had rejected God and so he was raising up a nation (Assyria) that would in the near future (722-721 BC) swallow up their wickedness.

- So he raised Micah to bring His warning (ch.1:1ff – having shown him the coming destruction), to blow the whistle that destruction was coming because God was unhappy with them.

With that picture in mind, Micah 6: 6 - 8 brings to us a strong message titled:

### **“What does the LORD require of you?”**

God asked the people of Israel this very question through prophet Micah during his time. The answer came as a three-fold response, explaining, what God requires from his people Israel. We will reflect on the response step by step, as our lesson today.

#### **I. “TO ACT JUSTLY” or “TO DO JUSTICE”**

Oppression was the way of life during that time as I said earlier, and God required Justice to roll in Israel. The rulers, judges and the rich were oppressing the poor (ch.2:1-2; 3:1-3). They were:

- Taking away the property of the poor (land, houses 2:1-2), forcing them into cheap labor, for survival.
- Denying them justice by raising fines for cases in court, which the poor could not afford, finally confiscating or rather taking away their property.
- Taking bribes and so economically oppressing the weak or marginalized who could not argue their case and get justice.

- Taking away the women of the poor (2:9).
- Using “dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights.” ( inflating prices, to fetch substantially from the poor people) (6:11)

God required them to do what is right and fair in their relationships, to re-deploy social power and transform their social system.

In other words, he wanted them to:

- Live in solidarity as one family, one nation, a peculiar people displaying the covenant relationship he had with them.
  - Sort out what belongs to who and return it to them (real social entitlement).
  - Practice Jubilee year (periodic cancellation of debts- Lev. 25) to restore and keep the social dignity, power and respect.
  - Redistribute land which was taken out of coveting (2:2), or rather let the original owners have it back.
  - Practice true religion, which emphasizes responsibility for the defense of the poor and powerless (not to be victimized by the rich, not to die in poverty), and not big sacrifices/offerings to mark their wealth.

Justice involves the sense of a standard of equality among people. It can be as simple as being honest in even the smallest routine business transaction.

Let's pause for a while and think of justice in our own time, how we treat other people, and what is going on around us.

We need to understand who God is, and how he has dealt with us **justly** through his grace all through, up to where we are, in every aspect of life. (Consider Psalm 82 here)

- Are we really doing justice by treating others that way?  
*(God brought them to us)*
- Can we do better than we have done so far, so that God can accept us as **just** according to the standards of the opportunities he has given us in this life?
- We need to remember that God is watching us to see us doing justice to others in all areas of our lives.

There is an old saying, "honesty is the best policy." But for the Christian, I think that slogan should be, "honesty is the **ONLY** policy."

Because this is a consistent theme in all of Scripture:

**that we are called to be people of fairness and integrity in all our dealings.**

**Honest to God with everything he has given us, and to others around us.**

.....**Help us Lord**.....

## II. LOVE KINDNESS

The second requirement is that God of Israel was calling his people to: “love kindness”, which is the backbone of the Exodus and the Covenant.

They were to fill their hearts with compassion and kindness towards one another  
*(God chose them, and brought them out of Egypt because he was Kind to them, saying: you are my people, I am your God).*

The Hebrew word for “kindness” is a rich one, used to mean various things such as mercy, tenderness, loving kindness, compassion, and steadfast love.

It is a word that is often used in a covenant sense, involving the attitude of two parties who are in covenantal relationship with one another.

In relation to God, “kindness” is used most often to describe His grace, or His UNEXPECTED mercy, to the undeserving humankind.

The requirement here was not that they “HAVE kindness”, they were to “LOVE kindness”. There is a big difference between the two.

One way of describing the difference is to say that they were not just being called do acts of kindness from a sense of **obedience or compulsion**, but to do them

**out of love** for one another as one people belonging to one God.

God wanted them to “change their attitude towards each other (3:1-2), come out of their ‘then’ prevailing **conscious-less-ness**”.

He was reminding them that they are one community, so they need to exercise solidarity with one another by protecting and being mindful of those in need.

Jesus’ emphasized the same requirement throughout his ministry, using the idea of UNEXPECTED acts of kindness.

- In the parable of the Good Samaritan, it was the one considered least likely to offer help who actually offered it (Luke 10:25 – 37).
- The parable of the prodigal son reveals to us the heart of a father who accepted his son against the expectation of almost everyone, including the son himself (Luke 15: 11 – 32).
- The dying thief on a cross, next to Jesus, has a lesson for us about the depth of God’s kindness or mercy – he was accepted by Jesus despite his “story” (Luke 23: 40-43).
- Because we have such a kind or merciful God, we are challenged to be kind or have mercy as well. Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

- Apostle Peter says, “All of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tender-hearted” (1 Peter 3:8).

Kindness is not what we want to show one another in this era of modernity and post-modernity; but it is the only response that makes any sense of our acknowledgement, of the kindness that God has shown us in Jesus Christ.

I am sure you agree with me that:

- We don't love kindness, and we don't show it to others, even to our very closest people. *(husband/ wife as mirror turning away.....)*
- We don't value kindness, sometimes we turn away others when they are kind to us, *(they are showing off)*, or we simply switch ourselves away from being kind *(saying “everybody for himself and God for us all”)*.
- We return rudeness with rudeness. *(Magnifying weakness or evil instead of fighting to remove it from our friend)*.
- We allow opportunities to show kindness to just pass us by.

.....Help us Lord.....

### **III. WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD**

The third requirement, was a challenge to the people of Israel to revisit their relationship with God, as they walked with him.

He wanted them to listen and understand *his heart*, by being very humble before him always, remembering the holy covenant between them and God (*having experienced God in many ways already*).

This means learning from Gods own example, how he walked with them (Israelites), especially in the Exodus – with lots of His kind deeds.

**Humble walk with God is indeed the description of life in faith – (what it means to be a Christian).**

Therefore, Micah was saying that God wanted the people of Israel to have the right relationship with Him – with God Himself, living as stewards to each other.

- That right relationship with God always begins with humility, not arrogance.

Humility before one another sets the ground for humility before God who is invisible (*how can we claim to love God whom we have never seen, while we hate our own brothers/sisters/spouses & neighbors?*)

Shedding off all our “pedigree”, - what we know we are/have, what really matters in our life, making us whoever/whatever we are, for the sake of others, just as Christ did, for our sake. (Phil 3: 7 – 11 - *Paul’s humility, shedding off his “pedigree” (– rezomee..) to shape himself unto God*).

- We are to live in communion with God, behaving discerningly, wisely or prudently, under his influence or instruction.
- This is the only way Israel would keep her identity as God’s chosen people, and enjoy peace with one another, in the covenant relationship with God.
- The New Testament reminds us (Ephesians 2:8-9), “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.”

God expects us to walk humbly with Him, in daily communion with Him.

Displaying the reality of our relationship with him and how we want it to be seen by others as the outworking of our faith.

God taught me through this passage that whoever I am is just for his use and glory, and I must be humble, carrying in me his heart for others if I will ever do justice to them, as I walk with him.

But it is hard to make this reality:

- We are arrogant.
- We are proud.
- We tend to think that God's role is to make us happy, to serve us, to grant our prayers only. But we are the ones to serve and glorify God through maintaining our relationship with him, as much as he is still invisible through being like him, with the other people he brings to us.

**In Conclusion my friends,**

- let us take good time to think about our relationships within our families, (with our spouses and children), neighborhoods, at our workplaces, here in church, and in any other grounds of our life demands.
- We are being called to display Gods justice through the love that he gave us as his children destined for **our real home** with him eternally.
- We need to revisit our communion with him and ensure that we experience him in our daily life of faith, showing the world that we are his children and we will attract all people to join us.
- This is a call to deep self - examination, to all of us, and if we heed to it, we shall transform the whole world. Please take time to think about these three requirements that God has reminded us today.

**In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**