

34. Encouragement for the Journey

Sermon



Wednesday 9th June 2021 – Glenda Bolitho



“What Does the Lord Require of You”

Bible Reading: Micah 6:8

Greeting

Greetings and a very warm welcome to our service here at St Luke’s Anglican Church Concord and to those who may be following us on line. I’m Glenda Bolitho a member of the ministry team here at St Luke’s and we gather together today to hear God’s word, to pray with one another, to sing praises to our Lord and to share our time together.

Before I commence let me pray.

*“May the words of my mouth and the
Meditation of my heart
Be pleasing in your sight
O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”*

Amen

Introduction

We are turning to the Prophet Micah in the Old Testament today. I was looking back yesterday at a letter Ken sent or emailed to us all in late March of last year. It included two lovely photos of our Wednesday Friendship Service Group. One was of our group sitting “socially distanced” in the hall at morning tea and the other was taken of us all sometime earlier, possibly the year before, standing or sitting in front of the organ and around the piano in the church. By the time of receiving Ken’s letter, however, due to Covid, we were no longer able to meet for Church, nor gather for morning tea.

Ken mentioned in his letter that I would be preparing articles of encouragement from the Bible, to be sent out by mail or email to us all over the coming weeks, to keep us looking to our strong and loving Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus. We called those articles **“Encouragement for the Journey”** and Larry helped assist me by illustrating them for us. When I looked back at the very first “Encouragement for the Journey” sent out, I see I had chosen Micah 6:8 together with a verse from Deuteronomy (10:12). I keep that beautiful verse of Micah’s on our fridge.

To-day I’d like to share a little more about the prophet Micah and his words to us in the Scriptures.

Some Background

Firstly, some interesting background history about Micah. Theologian, Clyde Francisco, has contrasted the great eighth-century BC prophets Isaiah and Micah in the following manner:

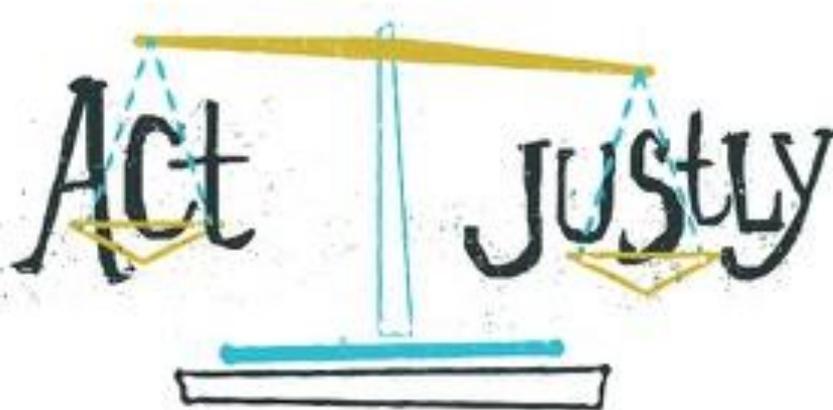
“Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, and in these two men we can see considerable differences. Isaiah belonged to the upper classes. He was a native of Jerusalem and in close touch with national and international affairs. The friend and counsellor of kings, he took an

active part in political movements of his day. His messages were addressed principally to rulers and groups of select disciples. Micah was a quite different kind of preacher. He was a simple farmer, far from the noise and confusion of the city. Whereas Isaiah had received his call amid the pomp of the temple, Micah heard his call in the cry of his oppressed neighbours. He was not a politician like Isaiah. His sermons dealt mainly with social morality and religious duty and not with matters of state and foreign policy. Both prophets paint the picture of the sins of the land.

As different as the men were, they were one in aim and substance of their preaching. They both appealed for justice and morality and preached the inevitable consequences of sin.”

Many scholars believe that the greatest single statement of the Old Testament is found in Micah 6:8 – *“What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”* Let us look a little more closely at these three tenets of Micah’s.

To Act Justly



One main emphasis of the Old Testament prophets was on the proper treatment of others. God’s ideal for his country was a society in which every citizen had a good standard of living but no one exploited a neighbour to increase his or her own wealth. The laws

that Moses established were designed to protect the rights of the underprivileged. Though slavery was permitted, the Hebrew laws concerning slavery were far more protective of the oppressed than the laws of any of Israel's neighbours.

The last resort of oppressed people has always been the court of law. When people feel their rights are being violated, they may appeal to a court of equity and have an unbiased judge rule regarding their condition. The situation in Israel, however, had become tragic. Judges were bribed by the rich to render a decision for them against the poor. The main theme of Amos's preaching had been the need for justice. Perhaps the key verse of his entire prophecy was "*Let judgement run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream*" (Amos 5:24).

Micah picked up on Amos's theme and made it a major part of his message. When he spoke of Jerusalem's coming destruction, he gave as one of the principal reasons, "*Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they look for the Lord's support and say, 'Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us'*" (Mic 3:11).

Any nation is about to crumble when its courts become corrupt. When justice is perverted other iniquities follow quickly. The core of Jesus' ministry was His love for the common people, who heard Him gladly, and He desired that they be treated properly by those who had authority over them. To act justly is to treat others with honour and integrity. This is a basic aspect of living for the Lord.

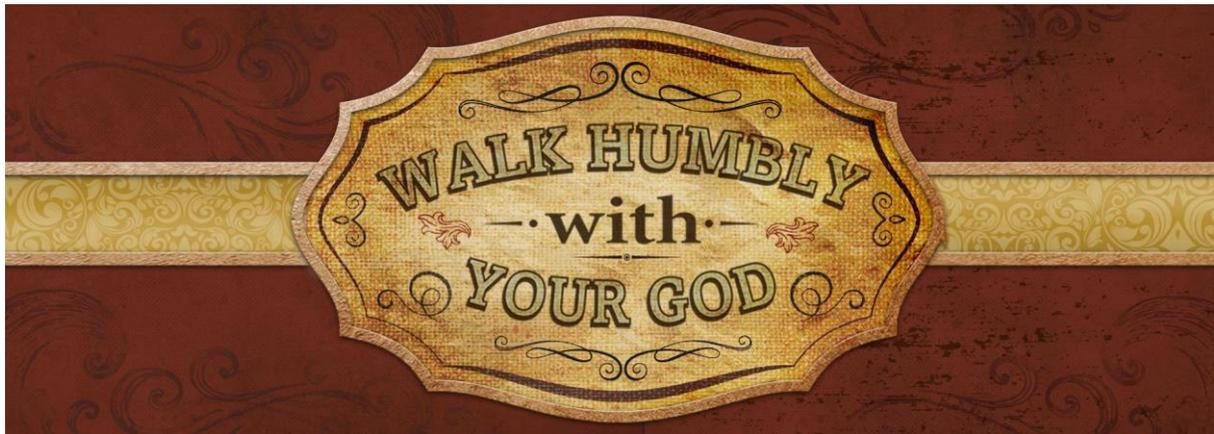
To Love Mercy



Although justice is important, something is needed to temper its severity. Mercy has been called the benevolence that disposes a person to overlook personal injury or to treat an offender better than he or she deserves. Here, however, the word has a much wider range of meaning. The Hebrew word for “mercy” was a favourite word in Hosea’s vocabulary. Often the word is translated “*loving kindness*.” We should never regard justice and mercy as opposite. Rather one involves the other. Justice is the foundation of God’s throne, but mercy is an inseparable part of his character. In many ways the term is parallel to the Christian word for “*love*”.

One thing should be stressed about mercy: we must love it. Only then can it become a pervading principle in our lives. When we love mercy, we stay busy helping those who are burdened. Mercy supplies our motivation for living. Mercy is never strained. Instead, it drops as the gentle rains of heaven. We do not say, “*I will be merciful*”. Rather, mercy becomes part of our character, like the dew spreads over the grass.

To Walk Humbly with your God.



Where Amos considered religion as ethical, bringing forth justice, and Hosea considered is as emotional, bringing forth love, Micah saw one other characteristic. A truly religious person is deeply spiritual, walking in fellowship with his or her Creator. This concept was emphasized in Isaiah's messages to Israel. He saw God highly exalted, and to him a person's greatest sin was to walk in the pride of his or her own countenance rather than in humble submission to God.

To become rightly related to God involves repenting of our sins after we sense that all is not well with us. To feel comfortably complacent and satisfied that we are all right with God is like dry rot at the root of our lives. The only attitude a sinful person can express in the presence of the Almighty is humility. When someone comes before God with this attitude, he or she will find forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Micah considered humility a fundamental part of God's command to humankind.

Conclusion

As we draw to a close, what thoughts can we glean from God's Holy Word to take with us this morning? May I suggest the words of our text, Micah 6:8, a verse that many scholars believe to be the greatest single statement of all the Old Testament:-

*“He has showed you O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

There can be no substitute for love and loyalty and fair dealing. The Lord does not want elaborate sacrifices, but humility and obedience from the people whom He loves.”

AMEN.

Reference Material

Bible Reading



What does
the Lord
require of you?

To act **justly**,
and to love **mercy**,
and to walk **humbly**
with your God.

—Micah 6:8