

02/20/22

“What Does the Lord Require of You”
Pastor David Pranga, Brewster Baptist Church

Micah 6:1-8

For those who are new today, we are in a series called, “The Bible – A Story of Love, Belonging, Redemption, and Hope. Each week, we are going to look at one book of the bible and share a passage with you. This week, we are on the book of Micah.

Let me start out with asking you a question. **Have you ever wondered to yourself what God wants from you?**

If we went around the room, we may hear a variety of answers. Some may say:

- God wants me to be a good person.
- God wants me to care for the people around me.
- God wants me to do more good deeds than bad deeds.
- Some may say that God wants me to worship Him.
- God wants me to be faithful and obedient.
- God wants me to love.

I think most of us would focus on what we need to do. But what does God want from us? Is God looking for something more? When I read through the book of Micah this week, Chapter 6 really spoke to me. Here, the question was: **“What does the Lord require of you?”** I have thought about when this question when I was young child, as teenager, a young adult, and even today.

I can remember being a child and thinking to myself, what would make God happy with me?

- Praying to God (bedtime or before a meal).
- Going to church should be important.
- Being a good person
- Helping other people would probably be a good thing.

As I have grown older, sometimes we think that this list has to continue to grow. We so often focus on what we need to do verses just enjoying who God is.

It’s amazing to me, that there is something inside of us, that makes us wonders what God wants from us? We ask questions like: Why am I here on this earth? What is my purpose in life? What is it that I am supposed to do? What does the Lord require of you? Has anybody else ever thought about these questions? I think we have at one time or another.

These questions are still as relevant to us today as they were to the people during Bible times. I don’t think much has really changed in the past thousands of years. Many of us want to please God.

Micah is one of the minor prophets. As we have learned from the other minor prophets, when God calls a prophet, there is a reason. The reason seems to be the same in all these books. The people are rebelling, they are walking away from God, and they are more concerned about themselves than keeping their covenant with Lord. As you read through the book of Micah, you quickly learn a few things about people, their relationship with each other, and their relationship with God. I want to share some observations with you.

- This is a time of great wealth and prosperity in the land of Judah.

- There is an emergence of a wealthy upper class. Wealthy investors were buying up small family farms and developing huge land holdings, which created a series of problems for the poor.
- Political corruption was pervasive and economic abuse flourished
- Legal injustice towards people happened frequently.
- Idolatry was running rampant. The nation had drifted so far from God, and they could not tell the difference between good and evil.
- On the outside, it appeared that God's people were thriving, but on the inside, they were rotting to the core. Their hearts were very far from God, and they were going through the motions and only cared about keeping rituals.

Their society was characterized by overconfidence, self-indulgence, and personal gain. It does not sound much different than our society today. We find out very quickly, God is not happy with His people. Once again, God sends a prophet named Micah to the rescue. It is Micah's responsibility, to warn the people that they were rebelling against God, and they needed to repent. The people needed to care for the marginalized and those people who were helpless.

If this did not change, God would bring judgment on his people.

Micah also shared that God is forgiving and that he is merciful. That God is like a shepherd, who loves his sheep and people very much. God cares for his people as he provides them with protection and security from their enemies. God's desire is for the people to repent and turn back to Him.

In the book of Micah, Micah warns the people multiple times to repent from their ways. Hoping the people would change their ways. Hoping they would repent and be obedient to God.

Unfortunately, the people do not change. The people are stubborn and thinking of themselves. They enjoyed taking advantage of those less fortunate, and not caring for the poor of society.

Let's read *Micah 6:1-8*, and as you read this dialogue between God and his people, imagine a trial taking place:

Listen to what the LORD says: "Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. "Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth.

For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. "My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.

I find it interesting that the Lord does not bring up the sins of the people. The Lord does not share how badly the people are behaving towards the poor and oppressed. What does the Lord say? "What have I done to you? How have I burdened you?" Is that reason you have turned away? God goes on to share about His faithfulness to his people. Generation after generation, God is faithful to his people.

I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

God's declaration is very simple. God has been faithful in taking care of Israel. The Lord has continued to bless and keep his covenant promises to His people. The Lord has rescued them from

slavery, raised up leaders to lead them, and performed miracles for his people he loved. God has continued to demonstrate his faithfulness to his people. Yet, the people he cares about are walking further away from Him. How do the people respond to God's faithfulness? Do you think they will repent or try to mend the relationship? Let's see:

With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

How do the people respond to God faithfulness, protection, and love? There is sense of sarcasm with the people's response. They were convinced that they could earn God's favor by deeds and various types of religious acts. They were *bargaining* with God and trying to buy him off, for they kept raising their offer to God. If I do this much, will that be accepted to you Lord. If I raised the stake higher, will I then be righteous in the eyes of God. God was not impressed by their actions. They once again missed the point which was about something much bigger to God.

Remember our opening question: **What does God desire of you?** It is the same thing that God desires for you that God desired for the people of Israel.

He has shown you, O mortal, 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.

What does the Lord want from his people? God does not want extravagant gifts or animal sacrifices. God wants our heart! God wants us to love him. When we love God, we become obedient to Him. We want to be faithful to Him. Just as God has been faithful to the people, from generation after generation.

God wants us to love Him and be faithful to Him. When our heart is focused on Him, then we can live a life that pleases the Lord. It starts with our heart.

What does God desire of us?

Verse 8 says, we need to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

God desires for us to love and be faithful to him. It is out of that love for God, that we need to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. It starts with our heart.

Let me ask you this morning, **Where is your heart?**

For some of us, our heart is focused on Him. That is the goal. For some of us we have been going through the motions. Our focus is really on something else and not on God. *I want to remind you that God welcomes you back. God desires a closer relationship with you.* There are some here who are searching or on a journey. They have not landed on Jesus Christ. We really want you to know that there has to be more to life than ourselves and doing everything in our own power. *For those who are in this place, I want to let you know that God loves you. God desires to have a personal relationship with Him. God desires to be in your heart today.*

The first step is to acknowledge where your heart is. I want you to be truthful about it. God already knows where our heart is. It is not going to surprise God, where we say our heart really is. If you think about it, God already knows where our heart is, it's where we think our heart is that matter. So,

what are we going to do about it? How can we live a life that truly pleasing to God? What does God really desire for us today? Micah answers these questions by showing us:

Three Characteristics of God's people

Characteristic #1 - Act justly which means “to do what is right and truthful according to God’s Word.” Put God first in your mind. God requires us to act and live differently than those around us. Specifically, we should be a people of character and integrity.

Micah taught in a culture characterized by idolatry, immorality, and self-righteousness. The people looked at ways to take advantage of other people for their own gain and prosperity. To act justly, is not taking advantage of someone else’s mistake. In some ways, you could say it is very much like America. Put God first and do the right thing. Ask yourself: do my actions match those of Jesus?

Some examples: when I’m in the checkout line, and the cost is lot less than what it should be indicating a mistake has been made. Do I say, “I think there is some kind of mistake”? Or when a cashier gives you more money back than you really should get. What is your first thought? Do you give the money back or do you gladly accept it? Acting justly is doing the right thing. We get our standard from God’s word, not from society.

Micah reminds us as Christians, that we also have a responsibility to care for social problems of this world. God is pleased when his people work together to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick. A few weeks ago, you heard from Andy and Sharon Palmer about the Foster Closet. They started a ministry to help provide free clothes, toys, equipment, and diapers to foster parents and grandparents care for the children in their care. They saw a need and they did something about it. When kids face challenges in school, I have seen our teachers step up to help tutor teens and children. In that way, everyone has equal opportunity to learn to read and figure out math and move forward with confidence. Acting justly happens when you show support to a single mom or dad who feels overwhelmed, struggling to find time and resources to help raise his or her children. You step in to help by helping their needs. At our church, people donate money to the Deacon’s Fund that assists people who have a financial need (for a car repair, rent, utilities, or something else).

These are just some examples of how you can act justly and make a difference. Let me ask you: what opportunities do you have to show God’s love to people who need it the most? How can you act justly and make a difference in the lives of people that need it the most? I challenge this week to pray about what role you can play to make a difference.

Characteristic #2 – Love Mercy

God also requires us as Christ-followers to “love mercy. What does mercy mean? Mercy is best defined as “not getting what we deserve”. It means showing compassion, kindness, and love. There are so many ways, you can show compassion, kindness, and mercy to people around you.

These are some examples of ways you can show loving mercy. One of the best ways to having empathy for people. Stop what you are doing and take the time to listen without casting judgment or telling the person what they should be doing. Empathy is a valuable skill that is lacking in our society now. Or when someone needs a ride to a doctor’s appointment, and if you can assist them by giving them a ride, or picking up a phone and calling a shut-in. Giving them words of encouragement and letting them know you care about them. It can be as simple as seeing a need a person has and fulfilling that need. This need may be financial, it may buy something the person really needs, that they could not afford. This is another way of showing love and mercy.

This one can be very difficult; it's showing loving mercy when you have been hurt by a family member or friend. Showing loving mercy, is the willingness to extend forgiveness to that person. That would be another example of showing mercy. Giving something that they don't deserve. But you do it because of God's love for you and grace.

Each of us have many opportunities to show loving mercy to the people around us. It is taking action to show love and helping someone that needs it the most.

#3 – Walk humbly with your God

The first two actions emphasizes our relationship with other people. Yet, the third focuses on our relationship with God. This is foundational. It deals with our attitude towards God. To walk humbly with God is to put him first and ourselves 2nd. It's simply putting the focus on God more than ourselves.

To walk humbly with God, is to acknowledge what Jesus has done for us. Jesus has forgiven our sins. When we humble ourselves, we are surrendering our life to Him. We want to walk by faith and obedience, and to follow Jesus and also what the Bible has to teach us.

When we walk humbly with God it means living in a proper fear and relationship with Him.

A few examples of what it means to walk humbly with God.

- For me walking humbly with God means, I need to meet with God. The more I meet with God and worship him, my inner desires changes. I want to become more like Jesus.

For me this can take place in reading the bible or writing a prayer. Spending time meditating on this. Something happens and my heart changes. It helps me to take the focus off myself and put it on God.

- Walking humbly is acknowledging any good fortune is a blessing from God. Your success really comes from God's mercy and grace. And it is not given for you to have to yourself, the gifts and talents and resources we have are given to us in order that we can be a blessing to others. We are blessed to be a blessing to others.
- For some people it is coming to church weekly. You know that coming on Sunday, gives you time to refocus your attention on God. This can happen during worship, prayer, or even the sermon.
- Lastly, walking humbly means asking for forgiveness. It's when we share with God our struggles and sins, that we can be forgiven. When we are forgiven, it is easier to walk humbly with God and show mercy to other people.

I just believe when we humble ourselves and put God 1st, our life can be so much more. It is the constant bowing down and surrendering our life to Jesus, that is important. It's during these times, that our heart can be filled with love towards God.

In summary, **“What does the Lord desire of you?”**

God 1st care about our heart! Are we loving Him!

2nd - God wants to us to act justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Those are three things that God desires of us.

Let us pray...