



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
**AMEN**

This morning I am going to do something that I rarely do and that is to preach on the text from the Old Testament. There was something in that reading that really struck home with me in Micah, verse 8. It concludes the discussion between Micah and the Lord, and it says: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Last week, I talked about the difference between being a disciple and a casual follower of Jesus. This is another way for us to think about what God wants for us and expects from us. "What does Yahweh require of you?"

To set the stage for this discussion between Micah and the Lord, we remember that Micah was a prophet. He lived during the time when Hezekiah was king of Judah around 715 B.C.E. It was a turbulent time in Israel's history where there was division in the nation. Yet, Micah foretells of a time to come where faithfulness and peace will come to Israel. As a prophet, he felt called by God to speak. And as our Scripture tells us, Micah had a line of communication with Yahweh. God tells Micah of all that he has done for His people. And God seems pretty clear that he does not want thousands of rams and rivers of oil. Micah reveals that the Lord wants all," to do

justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." So, I would like to think about that will you this morning.

First, I do want you to remind you that all the stories that I tell are real, and some of them even happened. There was a story about a man who was informed by his doctor that he had rabies. The doctor also had told the man that he had waited too long to come in so that nothing could be done about his condition. The man looked devastated but before the doctor could console him, she was called out of the room for an emergency. When the doctor returned, she saw the patient writing something on a piece of paper. Hesitantly, the doctor asked, "Is that you will, you're writing?" "No", the man said, "I'm making a list of all the people I am going to bite!"

Do any of you remember reading the Book of Lists written in the 70's? Today there are thousands of books published that contain lists. When I went on Amazon.com I was shocked to find so many books that have lists; reading lists, bucket lists, guest lists, a checklist manifesto, and list of how to declutter your home and a list of how to survive a bear attack. Some of the lists I found were of movies banned in the US, men who have cried in public, ways cats talk with their tails and even 9 people who were misquoted by Ronald Reagan. For some reason we seem to have a fascination with lists. I know one of my favorites is the old TO DO list that only takes second place to the HONEY DO list on the fridge. We all have lists.

In fact, even the Bible has lists; 7 days of creation, 10 Commandments, 12 disciples. Not to mention the numerous lists of genealogy. But the list for today is a short list of three things that God wants us to do; Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him. Notice that they are yes, a to do list, a list containing all verbs. What are you doing? How and who are you Loving? And How and with Whom are you walking.

First is to act justly. So, what exactly does that mean? When I googled justice quotes, I found all kinds of answers, more lists. Joseph Fletcher said, "Justice is nothing other than love working out its problems." Ben Disraeli said, "Justice is truth in action." I also read that justice brings people into a right relationship with God and each other. To me, justice is doing what is right even if it is not easy or popular.

Have you ever been given too much change at a store? Change back for a twenty when you only tendered a ten-dollar bill? I know that I have and pointed out the error to the check-out person. I would guess that they would be very thankful because their employer might get very angry if their drawer does not balance at the end of a shift. But why do you do such a thing? We do things like that because it is the right thing to do. I don't know about you, but I make mistakes all the time. Some are

expensive and some not so much. But how easy is it to do the Frank Sinatra “my way”, instead of the right way? God wants us to get it right even if it is not our way.

Justice is about doing what is right in God’s eyes. A common mistake we make is thinking that life is fair. Well, justice is not about being fair but rather about doing what is right. Read the books of Moses and you will hear many laws and rules that guided people to have just behavior toward others and toward God. It is for all to do justice.

Secondly, we are to love kindness. That sure sounds a bit easier than doing justice. But actually, it goes along with doing justice. I found a good story: Years ago, in a small town there was a man who was caught stealing a loaf of bread. When the judge investigated the man’s circumstances, he found that the man was out of work and had a family that was hungry. The judge understanding the extenuating circumstances said, “I’m sorry, but the law can make no exceptions. You stole the bread and therefore I have to punish you. I order you to pay a fine of ten dollars.” And the judge continued, “But, I want to pay the fine for you.” And so, the judge did just that and went on to cancel any jail time. So, the man go free. But that was not all, the judge ordered the bailiff to pass around a hat to everyone in the courtroom as he fined each one of them 50 cents for living in a city where a man has to steal in order to have bread to eat. Money was collected and given to the man. Justice was done that day in the courtroom. Kindness was also done that day in the courtroom. What is not to love about that?

We are called to act in the same way when we are put into certain situations. Not just to do kindness, but to love doing it. I think that is what God was asking of us in this text from Micah. Loving actions speak kindness clearly.

Last, but none the least we are called to walk humbly with God. You all know who Tom Selleck is right. He was Magnum P.I. before his Jesse Stone’s days as sheriff or PC Frank Reagan on Blue Bloods. Well, he told the paparazzi once, “Whenever I get full of myself, I remember the nice, elderly couple who approached me with a camera on a street in Honolulu one day. When I stuck a pose for them, the man said, ‘No. no. we want you to take a picture of US’.”

Our call is to walk humbly with God and that means we must understand that God is in control. We need to admit that we are sinful beings who cannot always do right, yet we are forgiven. And even though we deserve justice but through Christ’ sacrifice on the cross, we are blessed and instead receive His gracious mercy. It is then an

honor to serve God and natural that we should want to please Him. And we can do that by allowing God to lead us.

And to do that we must give up our self-righteousness and be truly humble. We should rely on God as it says in Psalm 33:20, as "our help and our shield". Perfectly, we should let go and let God direct our lives as we follow the path, He has set for us.

I would like to close with a poem that you are all familiar with.

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***"Footprints in the Sand."***

*One night I dreamed a dream...*

*As I was walking along the beach with my Lord,  
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.  
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,  
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.*

*After the last scene of my life flashed before me,  
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.  
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,  
Especially at the very lowest and saddest times,  
There was only one set of footprints.*

*This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.  
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,  
You'd walk with me all the way.  
But I noticed that during the saddest and most  
troublesome times of my life, there was only one  
set of footprints. I don't understand why when I  
needed You the most, You would leave me."*

*He whispered, "My precious child, I love you  
and will never leave you.  
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.  
When you saw only one set of footprints,  
it was then that I carried you."*

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**AMEN**