**Sunday, February 28th, 2021**

**Micah 6:1-8**

Years ago, in the small town of Catlettsburg Kentucky,

          there lived several town-drunks.

These men where classic characters, each unique in his own way,

          and from time to time they found themselves arrested

          and eventually in front of the City Judge.

In Catlettsburg, when one was found guilty of public drunkenness,

          it usually meant a fine and some jail time.

The day came when one of those town-drunks, Sy Billips,

          was arrested and brought before Judge Vernon Dinkle.

On this particular day, the Bailiff called Sy's name and asked him to stand.

Judge Dinkle said, "Mr. Billips, you are charged with Public Drunkenness.

          How do you plead?"

Sy, having been in this spot many times, knew full well what awaited him,

             so he decided to try a diversionary tactic.

He said, "Your Honor, if you don't mind, I would like to judge myself".

The judge was intrigued, so with a sheepish grin on his face, he said,

            “OK, let's hear it.”

Sy proceeded to call himself every kind of despicable name that came to mind.

He said, "Sy you are a low down, no good pole-cat of a man,

          who has abandoned every responsibility you ever had.

You have spent you whole life thinking of nothing but your own selfish desires. And now here you are, once again, throwing yourself on the mercy of this         court."

But you will not find mercy today, because you do not deserve it."

He looked up at the judge and said, "Your Honor, I find myself guilty as charged,

          and I sentence myself to a $100.00 fine, and 30 days in jail.

And I pray that God will help me understand the wickedness of my ways."

Judge Dinkle was visibly impressed, and he said,

          "Sy, I think you really mean it this time.

          I commend you for your honesty."

Then Sy interrupted the Judge and said,

         "Your Honor, I have one more thing to say:

          I suspend my sentence!"

But the Judge informed him: "Only I, the Judge can suspend your sentence.

          And I am not going to do that.

          So you have to pay the $100 fine,

          and spend 30 days in jail, as you have sentenced yourself."

We also cannot suspend our sentence for all the wrongs we have done,

          nor all the good we could have done but didn't.

Only God can.

When we turn back to God, and seek His forgiveness,

          our fines are paid, and our sentences are wiped out,

          and our relationship with Him is restored.

The people of Micah's time were much like Sy Billips.

They did not want to change how they lived.

They ordered Micah to stop predicting bad news and punishment.

They only prophesy they wanted to hear was:

            “There would always be plenty of wine and beer.”

Micah knew such a prophet was the only one they would listen to.

God had punished the northern nation of Israel for many sins:

          idolatry, Baal worship, child sacrifice, magic, and sorcery.

Now these same activities were creeping south into Judah.

The same judgment the North had suffered

          would come to Judah if people continued to disobey God.

Through the words of the prophet Micah, God warned them

           about their violence toward one another,

          their lying, cheating, deceitfulness, and dishonesty,

          their offering of bribes, and their false weights and measures.

But they did not heed the words of Micah.

They had no sense of justice,

          they simply wanted to get whatever they could for themselves,

          without considering the needs of others.

They had no understanding of kindness toward anyone.

They did not live or walk humbly with anyone.

And disaster did come upon them.

The words of Micah to the people of his time are still very relevant to us today.

What does the Lord require of us?

Simply to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

To do justice is not to play favorites,

          but to assure everyone is treated fairly and honestly.

To do justice requires that we consider God's judgment and wisdom,

           and then act accordingly to each person we encounter.

To love kindness, is to enjoy seeking out opportunities to show love

          to one another, to our neighbor, and to the stranger among us.

If we are to love kindness, we will love out neighbors, and really care for them.

To walk humbly with God, is to seek his ways, and to live accordingly.

It is to remember He is in charge, and not us.

It is a willingness to go wherever he leads us,

          and to do whatever tasks he places before us.

Jesus healed the sick, loved the poor, touched the leper,

          stood up for the down-and-out, forgave the sinner,

          condemned the religious hypocrites,

         dined with prostitutes and corrupt tax collectors,

          challenged the wealthy and powerful, fought for justice for the oppressed,

          defied His culture, renounced materialism,

          demonstrated that greatness is found in serving

          – and then died that others might live.

These actions – performed by one man – changed the world.

These same actions, when carried out by His followers,

          still change the world today.

And the world certainly needs a bit of changing.

Each and every one of us can be a part of changing the world for the better.

All we have to do is:

          Do justice,

                   Love kindness,

                             and Walk humbly with our God.

AMEN