

Isaiah 26:2 - *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*

Scripture

Micah 6:1-8 ESV

Message

Justice, Kindness and Humility

We are living in troubled times. And I'm not just talking about the COVID 19 Pandemic. Some days I look at the world and just feel so sad and overwhelmed with grief. I feel numb. Violence; Immorality; corruption by elected officials; Political division; Biblical values attacked and undermined; the De-humanization of pre-birth babies, or children seeking asylum, or certain people because they happen to be oriental As followers of Jesus I wonder if we don't become so overwhelmed by what we see going on in the world that we just find ourselves lethargic or even paralyzed to the point of inactivity. This world is a lost cause. There is nothing that we can do to make a difference. We just resign ourselves to muddle through each day while the rest of the world goes merrily on its way into deeper depths of evil.

But I believe it is time for us to **wake up to our calling**. I believe that the Bible makes it quite clear that we are to live our lives in such a way that the world will be a better place, that the people of our world will be moved into a relationship with God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasizes that those of us who are part of His Kingdom are to be **Salt and Light** in the world. Salt and Light are elements that are noticeable. They have a positive impact on their surroundings. We are called to live our lives in such a way that we are having a positive impact. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gathered his followers around Him, and **commissioned them to GO into all the World and influence others to become like them, to become Disciples**. Reach out to others throughout the world. Baptize. Teach. There are other passages in the Bible that teach us that we are not to sit on our hands, or zip our mouths shut without trying to make a difference.

Becoming a believer, a follower of Jesus is not about us. It is not about what do I get out of this. I believe that God is calling us, saving us, so that we will be a part of what He is doing in the world, that we are to be living our lives in such a way that we are having a positive impact on the broken and evil world that we live in. What are we doing to bring God's values into the life of this world.

As I already pointed out, there are passages that emphasize that we are to be living in such a way that the world will be aware of our presence and lives will be impacted for God. As I thought about that, this passage from Micah came to my attention. I found my mind going to this passage and the challenge of verse 8.

The passage is found in the book of Micah. Micah was an Old Testament Prophet to God's people. The story of the people of God in the Old Testament is story of up and down spirituality. There were times when the Jewish people followed God and His commandments. They worshiped Him. But there were other times when they rebelled against God, disobeyed His law, worshiped idols. During those times of rebellion and sin, God raised up Prophets to preach to the people, and to call them to turn back to the Lord. They warned the people that if they did not repent, they would be punished by God. They would fall into the hands of evil nations, who would oppress them and make them their slaves again. Micah was one of those prophets. His ministry was during a time of great economic prosperity, but also a time of spiritual decay. The rich got richer, often at the expense of the poor. It was God's intent that **land was to remain in a family**, handed down from one generation to another, but land was being stolen from families and became the possession of the rich. The practice of worshiping idols was widespread. Sexual immorality, even among the spiritual leaders of the land was widespread. Micah's preaching included words of strong rebuke and warning of disaster that was to come in they did not turn from their sin and return to the Lord.

In chapter 6, Micah's sermon takes on the form of a lawsuit. The mountains and trees are called to serve as witnesses. The opening argument is an indictment – here are the charges. Micah as the prosecuting attorney speaks for God – **Vs. 3**. He raises the question from God, **How have I wearied you?** He recalls for the people the **Righteous Acts of the Lord**: He delivered them from slavery in the land of Egypt; He provided strong spiritual leaders – Moses, Aaron, Miriam. He protected them from other nations. He did not allow false

prophets to speak curses against them. God has been nothing by good to them. What reason do they have for turning away from God.

Micah then challenges them to respond to God's goodness (Vs. 6-7). Would God desire that they offer sacrifices and offerings? These were forms of Worship that the people are instructed to observe in the pages of the Law. But just going through the acts of sacrifice while their hearts are far from the Lord is never acceptable. And then he comes to our Key verse for today: "**He has told you, O man 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.**"

Micah mentions three things that God desires from His people. It is important to note **that this verse is not a formula for "how to become one of God's people."** Some people think that. But this verse is addressed to people who are already counted as God's people. We come to God by faith in response to His grace. After we come to God we respond to His love for us through the choices that we make, through the way we live our lives. I believe that these verses outline for us a way to have a positive impact on this evil and broken world. Micah suggests that there are three things that ought to characterize our lives as a believer in God. **Do Justice, Love Kindness, and Walk humble with your God.** Let's take a look at each of these:

**Do Justice:** Justice comes from the same root as the word Righteous. The way we live our lives should be characterized by doing what is right. **Jeremiah 22:3** gives us some insight into the meaning of this verse: **<sup>3</sup> Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.** Micah's wording is important to note. **DO JUSTICE.** Our concern is not only to observe that what is right is done, but must include **DOING** what is good. There are times when **we must get involved** ourselves in bringing about Justice for those who are being mistreated and oppressed. Jon Bloom writes: **It's much easier to "love justice" than to "do justice." It's much easier to rant against injustice than to take meaningful action to stop it. Ranting costs us little to nothing. Doing justice makes personal, time-consuming, heart-rending demands on us.** As we take note of the places and situations where people are being oppressed or mistreated, we may need to consider what we can do ourselves to bring about Justice.

The second action that Micah suggests is to **Love Kindness.** The word that is translated Kindness here comes from the Hebrew term "**Hesed**". We have talked about this word before. It is the word that is sometimes translated **Grace** or **Lovingkindness.** It is the word that is used to describe **God's actions toward His people.** In this passage Micah has referred to the Righteous Acts of God – rescuing, providing for, protecting. Again a quote from Jon Bloom helps us: **Loving kindness demands a deep structure heart orientation that shapes all our actions.** The wording is important. We are to love kindness. **We cannot Love kindness without being kind.** It is likely that as we live our lives in this world, we will have more opportunities to practice this step than the first step. We will have more occasions when we can express kindness toward others.

Finally, Micah says that our lives should be characterized by "**Walking Humbly with our God.**" The Bible always puts relationships with others together with relationship with God. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Micah transposes the order here, but he does not suggest that loving others is more important than loving God. The two go together. **To walk humbly with our God is to choose to live our lives in submission to His authority.** He alone is the master of our lives. He alone determines our choices, our behaviors, our attitudes, our words. We are under His authority. As we live our lives under His authority, we will find ourselves moved to repentance. The person who walks humbly with God will be aware when he or she has stepped out from under His authority. So walking humbly means we are bringing every action, every word, every thought into conformity with the character of God.