

## ***What Does the Lord Require of ME?***

*A Sunday Morning Message on February 15, 2026*

Micah 6:6-8

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*What does the Lord require of you?*

*What does the Lord require of you?*

*Justice, kindness, walk humbly with your God*

*To seek justice and love kindness*

*and walk humbly with your God*

This little song is the reason I know these verses from Micah by heart and it's also how I learned the easiest way to sing as part of a large group in three part harmony. I was at a conference about 25 years ago with about 100+ pastors and church educators in attendance. This verse was our theme for the conference so at the first plenary we learned to sing it in harmony, without accompaniment. They divided us up into three groups of about the same size. The first group sang the first two lines, just those two lines, over and over again. Then the instructors moved on to the second group and taught them just the third line. Again, they sang it over and over again. Finally, the third group – that was my group – learned the last line. We sang it over and over again. All this took about 30 minutes or so. Then, we put it all together.

To do this, all we had to do was to sing our part over and over again as the director cued us in. The first group began singing. After the end of their second line, the second group was cued in. Then when they reached the end of their line, we in the third group were cued in. All each of us did was sing our specific lines over and over again, using the melody we were taught. The resulting three part harmony was breathtaking! We just kept singing our respective parts over and over again with the sound rising into the rafters and out the open side panels of the Craigville tabernacle where we were singing. Then, one by one, the director cued each group to stop as they came to the end of their line. In the end, just my group was singing and then we too were

cued to stop. It was so beautiful as those pure crisp notes gently faded away into silence, many of us had tears rolling down our faces, myself included.

That moment for me, dear ones, became one of complete surrender to the joy of singing. I had sung as part of choruses before in church, in high school and in college and I always enjoyed it. But I would also get so nervous trying to remember my part, listening keenly for when I was to hop in to the musical fray. But this experience of singing this simple round composed of the words of one of the most impactful verses in the entire Bible was nothing like that. It became, in pretty short order, a holy moment of surrendering to the Holy Spirit, trusting that each of us only needed to sing our one line giving the rest to God. To this day, when I think of sacred moments I have been blessed to experience, this is one of them. This is also why when I was putting together this sermon series on the prophets, I knew Micah had to be in the mix. And here we are.

Micah is actually one of the oldest prophets in terms of when he lived during the history of Israel. Dated somewhere in the last quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Micah's is a populist message. We don't know much about him personally but we do know he was from a rural area. He was a younger contemporary of the prophet Isaiah and had great disdain for the corruptions and pretensions of Jerusalem. He especially condemned religious practices which were not accompanied by ethical performance.<sup>1</sup> Our reading for today comes from the final chapters of his book, when Micah is moving beyond judging the shortcomings of the leaders to a message of hope. In other words, as critical as he was of the leaders of his time, he knew that a message of hope grounded in God's abiding love for the people was essential as the people faced their own tumultuous times.

These particular verses we read this morning are presented in the form of a sort of divine lawsuit with the speakers changing rapidly.

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Mobley, *The People's Bible*, p.1306.

Chapter 6 begins with God speaking, then it shifts to the prophet, and then back again to the Lord. Finally, as verse 6 begins, it is now a spokesperson for the community who enters the conversation: “With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high?” Then he runs through a list of what God might expect: Burnt offerings; calves a year old and thousands of rams with rivers of oil? Or perhaps God expects the first born of the person speaking? This is when the prophet Micah re-enters the conversation delivering what is basically the punchline of this entire exchange: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.”

There it is – the key message at the core of the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. What does the Lord expect of us, we, God’s people living in these crazy times – whether that is right now or 3000 years ago or 200 years in the future. What *does* God expect of us as we go through life each day, however the minutes and hours come together for each of us? Does it matter who we are or where we are? Are God’s expectations for us different if we are old or young, healthy or infirm, gay or straight, wealthy or just getting by? Let’s face it, we all wonder about this question way more than we want to admit. Maybe God has different expectations of us since our lives, our realities, are all so very different. Maybe God takes into account how busy we are just getting through life and that’s why we’re living our lives as we are. Good question but here’s the thing. We are all the same to God. We are all equally beloved of God. Being poor or wealthy doesn’t matter to God. Being healthy or sick doesn’t matter to God. Being an immigrant or someone born here doesn’t matter to God. Even being a criminal or a victim doesn’t change God’s love for you. However, God’s abiding and unfailing, unwavering love does not come without strings. It does not come without expectations for each of us and those expectations are exactly what Micah is trying to get his folks then – and still us today – to understand. He even asks the question, and then answers in words

so simple anyone can understand: *What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.*

Amazingly simple words which at the very same time are so complicated. What does it mean to “do justice?” Well, it can mean a lot of things. It can mean standing on a protest line, holding a sign protesting everything from ICE to wage theft to nuclear power plants. It can also mean something as ordinary as making sure that if you buy something and the harried clerk gives you too much change, you go right back in and return the extra. It can even look like paying for someone’s groceries when they don’t have enough left on their EBT card.

Okay, then. What does it mean to “love kindness?” How do you love kindness? This just means that kindness is so central to who you are that you literally can’t be unkind no matter what else is going on. So, if the old grump down the street needs help getting his trash bin back down the driveway, you do it, no matter what political flag is flying on his flagpole. Even when he snarls at you that he doesn’t need any help. It means, as Jesus would say, turning the other cheek when people are hurtful and mean because it’s just not in you to be mean back. You might think about, even imaging what you could say – but you just don’t because it’s not kind. It may be warranted, but it’s not kind. That’s what you do when you love kindness.

Okay, now on to the last piece of this. What does it mean to walk humbly with your God? Yikes! This is actually a tough one for most of us because of that word “humbly.” For most of us, the need to be humble just doesn’t cross our awareness that often. We just go through our days doing what we need to do, blissfully unaware of how it might just be possible that other folks might see what we do or say as the opposite of humble. What do I mean here? Well, do you begin conversations assuming you know more than the other person you’re talking with, no matter the subject area? Or perhaps you listen to another person’s story and then, instead of talking to them about them,

you jump right into a story about yourself that is similar to the experience they just described to you? That dear ones, is not being humble. And if we have trouble being humble with each other, people who are right in our line of sight, how about being humble in God's presence? Sounds simple enough, but is it? Think about it, when something bad happens – do you get mad at God? Do you feel like when things don't work out the way you imagined that it's God's fault somehow? Rain on a travel day or the day of the big family reunion planned for your backyard? Geesh, God! What's up with this weather? Even though this is a somewhat understandable reaction, it is not being humble before God. Not even close.

So where does all this leave us? How do we move forward as individuals, as a church, working to do justice, and love kindness, and do it all humbly knowing God is with us? That, at least, is easy to answer. Just like how I learned to sing that simple song in harmony, all we have to do is our part – our one line – over and over again, trusting God to create beautiful and sacred harmony of our single actions. We do this every day, one day at a time, sometimes one hour or even one minute at a time, putting one foot in front of the other. And guess what?

That's really all God is asking of us – to try. To try to do justice. To try to love kindness. To try to be humble before God. To try. In other words, to be a just, kind and humble person as best as we are able, knowing that God already loves us no matter what. We also need to hold on to the truth that God is counting on us to do this as the single most important way of bringing God's vision of shalom – peace and happiness and wellbeing for everyone – into reality. We hold a piece of this responsibility from God. The real question then, is, what are we – what are YOU – going to do with your share of God's love and the responsibility that comes with it. Something to think about as the Season of Lent begins this week, isn't it. I hope you'll join us each week of Lent as we try to figure this out together. Amen.