



One Page Sermon

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Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

Micah avoids blame, looks for solutions

Micah was a prophet during a time of great anxiety. There were economic insecurities and political upheaval. There were threats from foreign nations that threatened the very existence of Israel and Judah. In the midst of this crisis, it was easy for these two nations to blame each other. It feels all-too-familiar, doesn't it? One group blaming the other for all of the problems of the world. Judah convinced that the idolatry of Israel is to blame. Judah sure that Assyria is coming to destroy them because of the failure of Israel.

Micah begins by declaring that Israel is to blame for Israel's problems and Judah is to blame for Judah's problems. The prophet is all about accountability, making sure the people know what is the problem. "They covet fields and seize them, houses and take them away. They oppress a householder and those in his house, a man and his estate" (2:2).

Micah's ire is shared between Judah and Israel. Instead of playing the blame game, Micah speaks truth to the powerful. They are responsible for the doom that is to come. It will be shared, and it was well-earned by their unjust ways. Then in Micah 6, an interesting conversation takes place. It is made to feel like a courtroom. This is my paraphrase of Micah 6.

On trial: Us.

Judge: "You have acted unjustly. You rob the poor, trample the weak, and forget God. Why? What has God done to you? God brought you out of Egypt, gave you great leaders and clear instructions on how to operate in this new Land. God conquered all of your enemies and cleared the way for you to prosper."

Us: "You're right. We have messed up. We throw ourselves on the mercy of the court. What should we do to make it right? Should we beg and plead, bow down and grovel? Should we build great churches with extravagant worship and exuberant praise? Should we give everything we have? Do we need to suffer pain and humiliation to make it right?"

Judge: "You know what must be done. You know what God wants. It is simple: Do justice. Love mercy. Walk humbly with God."

And there it is, my favorite verse in the entire Bible. Micah stops being interested in blame or doom and gloom. Instead he turns to the solution. In the midst of deep anxiety, fear, and struggle, here are simple instructions on how to live a life of faith. Do you want to



correct the wrongs of society and move the world toward a better place?

Justice, mercy, and humility are the ways to get there. It is important to note however, that worship is still important. The judge does not tell the people not to worship. The judge still wants worship, just not audacious, showy, extravagant worship that does not lead to a life of faith.

Justice is what God's love looks like in public. It is God's love applied to systems, cultures, and governance. Justice is about education, advocacy, and making sure that the powerful do not exploit the weak. Mercy is God's love in relationships. Acts of mercy are feeding someone who is hungry, befriending someone who is lonely, and offering healing to someone who is sick. Justice and mercy are not mutually exclusive, and neither one alone is enough.

Worship gives life to our justice work. Worship informs our mercy. Worship fuels us and reminds us that we are not alone. Worship keeps us in humility as we walk with God. It keeps us aware of who and whose we are with a healthy realization of self. Worship which flows from a deep gratitude—and not a desire to show off, perform, or exploit—is fuel for a life of faith. It is a chance to tap into the Spirit and feel the presence of God.

Doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God are a not a solo endeavor. In fact, I would argue, it is impossible to sustain on your own. We earned our way into the mess we are in with injustice, idolatry, and forgetting God's role in our life. Micah wants us to move beyond the blame game, realize where we have gone wrong, and make the needed changes.

Sage advice from an ancient source reminds us that worship is not just something to do on Sunday. Worship is not a show to make us feel or look better. Worship that is sincere, thoughtful, communal is what God wants from us so that we can live life of justice, mercy, and humility.