



SERMON RECAP

SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

Series: Mission and Vision

Sermon: Two two rivers of God's justice and compassion

Scripture: Micah 6:6-8

There is a common culinary theory that flavor contrasts create something wonderful together. If you're my age or older you might remember the old Reese's Peanut Butter Cup commercials where two people holding their beloved snack, one a chocolate bar and the other a jar of peanut butter, bump into each other and exclaim, "You got peanut butter in my chocolate," and "You got chocolate in my peanut butter" at the same time. The tagline, "Two great tastes that taste great together," is an example of sweet and savory that is an example of this principal.

Other examples of this principle are hot honey chicken, cayenne on watermelon, salted caramel, and coffee and vanilla. One of my favorite types of cuisine is Thai food, which seems to use the spicy and sweet contrast a lot.

I don't bring all of this up because I'm hungry (in fact I had a great egg, ham, and cheese panini which might fall under 'savory and salty'). I bring it up because things that feel like opposites often create something in balance that is wonderful. Like a good peanut butter and chocolate ice cream cone, God's justice and compassion are two great tastes that taste great together!

The Hebrew terms *chessed* and *mishpat* are usually translated into the phrases compassion and justice. Sometimes *chessed* is loving-kindness, steadfast love, or simply mercy. Sometimes *mishpat* is translated to ordinances or judgment and sometimes is related to punishment or retribution.

Mishpat is extremely important in a society. Especially in a religion that names the fundamental element of our relationship with God as the *Torah*, that is Law, or Instruction. If Law is how God connects with people and how the people relate to God, then justice is needed. It comes at the result of breaking the law, and acts as an important guardrail to keep the relationship in tact.

Chessed is extremely important too. Compassion and steadfast love are why God cares about humanity at all. It is steadfast love that provides manna in the wilderness, water from the rock, and saved the people out of slavery in Egypt. Mercy binds wounds, fills the hungry, and provides for those in need.



Together Chessed and Mishpat create the Hebrew concept of *Tsedekah* or righteousness. This balance between Justice and Compassion is also known as *Shalom*, or peace. In the Hebrew Bible, Justice and Compassion are the primary ways that God is understood to exist. There are other descriptors of God, which include merciful, patient, mighty, warrior, even jealous, but Justice and Compassion come up time and again in the Torah, the prophets, and the Psalms.

God is a God of Justice and Compassion, and Scripture often pictures these qualities as flowing water. From the rivers of Eden, to Amos's ever-flowing stream of righteousness, to the still waters of Psalm 23 and the nourishing streams of Psalm 1 — all the way to the river of life in Revelation — God's presence moves like living water, sustaining, restoring, and connecting God with humanity.

And this, my friends, is why we are the church of Two Rivers. Yes, there are other historic and geographic reasons. We are the combination of the two rivers of First Methodist Church and Memorial Heights Methodist. These two churches came together in 2008. We are here in Rock Island at the confluence of the Rock River and the Mississippi River.

But the two rivers are more than geography or history. They are the rivers of tradition and creativity, deep roots and new immigrants, mercy ministries and advocacy, Biblical scholarship and radical inclusion. Our vision as God's people is to be the Church planted by the ever-flowing streams of God's love and compassion. Rooted in Micah's call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. We are the people of Two Rivers.

NEXT WEEK:

Our Mission (Part 1 of 3) Serve with justice