

Union Baptist Church
31 Manhattan Avenue
White Plains, New York 10607
Pastor Verlin D. Williams, D.Min.

Day 1: Faith and Justice

Lesson Title: "Justice is Love in Action" Micah 6:1-8 NKJV

1 Hear now what the Lord says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, And let the hills hear your voice. 2 Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's complaint, And you strong foundations of the earth; For the Lord has a complaint against His people, And He will contend with Israel.

3 O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me. 4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5 O My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled, And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, From Acacia Grove to Gilgal, That you may know the righteousness of the Lord."

6 With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?"

Biblical Context

The Book of Micah is set during the 8th century BCE when the kingdoms of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom) were facing external threats and internal corruption. Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea, addressed issues such as social injustice, idolatry, and the people's departure from true worship of God. He called for repentance and a return to covenant faithfulness.

Verse by verse:

Micah 6:1-2: "Hear now what the Lord says: "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, And let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's complaint, And you strong foundations of the earth; For the Lord has a complaint against His people, And He will contend with Israel."

Commentary: Here, God is seen as calling a cosmic courtroom session, summoning nature as witnesses to His charges against Israel. This sets the stage for a legal dispute where God will present His grievances against His people.

Micah 6:3-5: “O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me. For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled, And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, From Acacia Grove to Gilgal, That you may know the righteousness of the Lord.””

Commentary: God recounts His past acts of salvation and faithfulness to Israel, highlighting the Exodus, the leadership provided through Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, and protection from the schemes of Balak and Balaam. This is intended to remind Israel of God's covenant love and challenge them to reflect on their own unfaithfulness.

Micah 6:6-7: “With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

Commentary: These verses present a rhetorical response from the people, asking what they must do to please God. The hyperbolic suggestions of extravagant offerings highlight a misunderstanding of what God truly desires, suggesting an outward compliance without genuine spiritual commitment.

Micah 6:8: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

Commentary: This verse summarizes the heart of God's expectations for His people. Instead of extravagant rituals, God desires a life characterized by justice, mercy, and humility. This verse is a profound ethical summary, emphasizing right living over ritualistic practice.

Key Words

In Micah 6:8, there are three key Hebrew terms that encapsulate deep moral and ethical principles. Here are the Hebrew meanings of the words "justly," "mercy," and the phrase "walk humbly":

1. Justly refers to justice, judgment, or the act of making fair and equitable decisions. It implies maintaining fairness in dealing with others and ensuring that justice is administered without partiality or corruption.
2. Mercy is a rich term in Hebrew that conveys loving-kindness, steadfast love, mercy, and loyalty. It is often used to describe God's covenantal love towards His people. In human relationships, it suggests showing kindness, compassion, and loyalty beyond what is expected.
3. The verb (to walk) implies a manner of life or conduct, and (to be humble) suggests a posture of humility or modesty. This phrase indicates living one's life with a mindset of humility, recognizing one's place before God, and acting accordingly.

The lesson here is that true devotion to God is shown not through external rituals, but through ethical living and relationships characterized by justice, loving-kindness, and humility before God and others.

Loving Kindness as a Possibility

Amid federal budget cuts affecting local schools, Union Baptist Church pondered how they might live out the values of justice and faith as called for in Micah 6:8.

With breakfast and lunch programs potentially reduced due to these cuts, many children at a nearby elementary school could be at risk of going without adequate nutrition. The church community reflected on the implications of such an issue of injustice targeting underserved communities. What if they were to ensure that all children have access to the fundamental right of daily nourishment? How might they act in the face of such challenges?

Inspired by the call to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God," Union Baptist explored the possibility of coordinating with neighboring churches to create a meal supplement program for the affected school. Could volunteers from these churches come together to prepare and deliver meals every morning, ensuring that no child starts the day hungry?

Discussion Questions:

- 1. How does Micah 6:8 challenge our personal understanding of justice in our daily lives, especially concerning the needs of our community's children?*
- 2. In what ways does our faith call us to act when we see injustices, such as the lack of access to essential resources at local schools?*
- 3. How can we, as individuals and a church community, work collaboratively to address systemic issues and support those who are most affected by them?*
- 4. What are practical steps we can take to build stronger relationships with neighboring churches and local schools to promote justice and equity?*
- 5. Consider your own gifts and resources. How can you personally contribute to our church's mission to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God?*
- 6. How can we ensure that our efforts to support the community are sustainable and have a lasting impact?*

Here is a revised version that invites the audience to imagine potential actions rather than describing a definitive act by Union Baptist Church:

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While these reflections remained possibilities, they highlighted how churches, driven by their shared faith, could unite for a common cause of justice. By imagining such actions, Union Baptist, along with its community, continued to explore ways to embody their commitment to serving and uplifting their community in the spirit of love and righteousness.

This version maintains the core message while leaving room for imagination and encouraging the audience to think about how they might respond to similar situations.