

Grateful Obedience Micah 6:1-8

Today we finish our series, “Your Kingdom Come: How Citizens of Heaven Live on Earth.”

- We’ve talked about loving one another; how to relate to our enemies/government/neighbor/temptations of the world; and about the global spread of the gospel.
- We finish with an important passage of Scripture about how God’s people should be marked by justice, mercy and humility. [Pray]

Well Micah 6:8 is very popular verse, and for good reason; it summarizes basic Christian ethics wonderfully.

- My classy-hippie wife has a tattoo of Micah 6:8 on her foot...
- It hangs in public facilities in various places; it’s often quoted by politicians...
- I recall former Pres Bush citing it at Representative John Lewis’ memorial service recently...
- **It’s important to see it in its context context, so that we may understand what motivates this kind of life.**
- God’s people had grown cold toward God (you see this in the first five verses of the chapter).

It’s kind of like what may happen in a **marriage**...

- **Marriages** suffer for a number of reasons: unrealistic expectations; lack of biblical clarity; failure to manage time at work and home; failure to deal with conflict properly; poor communication; giving into various temptations, and so on.
- **But sometimes it's *the slow drift* that happens when spouses take each other for granted; when they fail to convey their gratitude and appreciation for the other.**
- Emotional coldness and hurt feelings often come as a result, severely damaging the relationship.
- That kind of thing that’s happening here between Israel & God.

The Lord hasn’t grown cold from Israel, but they have grown cold toward him.

- **They have taken the Lord for granted.**
- And **we** can do the same thing in our relationship to God.

The language that God uses here in ch. 6.1-5 is the personal and passionate language, like a father’s plea to a child or a husband’s plea to a wife (Prior).

**God reminds his people of what he had done for them,
in order to motivate them to obedience (justice/mercy/humility).**

He calls them to *remember* his saving acts in history.

Micah 6:8 is a response to the gospel.

It’s not the gospel; but a proper response to it.

- It's not "if you do Micah 6:8 you'll be saved."
- It's "because you have been delivered, therefore, give your life to him."
- It's the same pattern as the Ten Commandments: "because I redeemed you; obey."
- And in the NT: because of God's Grace, give your life to him (Rom12).

Two Parts: (1) Remembrance, and (2) Requirements

Micah's Context

Micah gives this word in a time of societal/spiritual brokenness.

- No one goes unaddressed:
 - The whole earth (1:2);
 - Leaders (3:1-3);
 - Prophets (3:11),
 - businessmen (6:10-11),
 - Himself (7:1-10).
- He is "The People's Prophet."
- He takes up for the weak and powerless and calls everyone to account.

His Background (1:1)

A. Micah's name means 'Who is like Yah[weh]'?

- Micah wrote his own name into his book at the conclusion (Read 7:18-20), like Van Gogh, as he reflected on God's kindness and forgiveness.

B. He was from the town of Moreseth

- This rural town was almost 25 southwest of Jerusalem, between the city and the sea.

C. His Time Period (1:1)

At the end of the 8th century B.C.

- During the reigns of Jotham and Uzziah (along with Jereboam II in the North)
- There was an emergence of the upper class, which led to a corruption.
- A nation can be wealthy and godless.
- About 740BC-687 BC – 53 years total!

MICAH 1:2-End

Examples of the corruption: See if this doesn't sound like today:

1. Idolatry (1:7)
2. Seizing land from the weak (2:1-2) – major problem worldwide
3. Refusal to listen to faithful preaching (2:6, 11)
4. Robbing poor refugees (2:8)
5. Taking advantage of widows (2:9; Mk 12:40)
6. Taking away the inheritance of children (2:9b)
7. Politicians failing to stand up for justice (3:1-2, 9)
8. Leaders taking people's lives in order to complete building projects (3:9-10)
9. Judges taking bribes; religious leaders serving greedily (3:11)
10. Business men cheating, lying, and doing violence (6:10-12)

11. People shedding innocent blood (7:2-4)
12. People distrusting everyone in society (7:5)
13. People fighting within the family (7:6)

Micah despised these practices and thundered away at the corruption.

- Notice how comprehensive “**doing justice**” was and how counter-cultural it is.

What’s striking to me about Micah’s denouncements is **his incredible RANGE!!!**

- **Micah is the Stephen Curry of the Prophets!**

If he were alive today, he would bring a word about everything from

- Large scale headlines
- To the divorced husband who isn’t paying his child support,
- To domestic violence;
- To racial prejudice;
- To employers who are harsh and unfair or employees who lie and cheat;
- To people who make false accusations about others;
- To families not caring for the elderly in their family;
- To politicians who make racial slurs and fail to care for the needy;
- To preachers who don’t preach the whole council of God;
- To pastors who are abusive, immoral and hypocritical;
- And to churches for not speaking against immorality, taking care of the poor, or the vulnerable.

His Book (1:2-7:20)

1. The book flows in and out of good news and bad news
2. It covers different time periods
3. It doesn’t progress in chronological order

If you read chapter 1 through 7 it is hard to follow along.

- That’s because the book of **Micah wasn’t given in one setting, like Obadiah or Nahum.**
- This is a compilation of sermons – **Micah’s Greatest Hits!**

With that said, there **is a loose structure of judgment and salvation:**

Three Cycles of Judgment and Salvation

“Hear” [1:2; 3:1; 6:1]

1. Cycle 1 (1:2-2:11 // 2:12-13)

1:2-2:11, Judgment against Israel

2:12-13, Salvation for Israel [Read]

2. Cycle 2 (3:1-12 // 4:1-5:15)

3:1-12, Judgment Against Israel

4:1-5:15, Salvation for Israel

3. Cycle 3 (6:1-7:6 // 7:7-20)

6:1-7:6, Judgment Against Israel

- Several short sayings contrasting sin with the simplicity of pleasing God through covenant faithfulness (6:8)

7:7-20, Salvation for Israel (Read)

Micah's message is similar to all other prophets: judgment and mercy.

In our text: In light of God's work of salvation, devote your life to him in grateful obedience — an obedience marked by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.

#1: Remembrance (6:1-5)

V. 1-2: Micah notes the seriousness of this moment, as he calls on the mountains to serve as God's witnesses. These "mountains" convey several ideas:

- All of creation is under God's authority, and obeys his word.
- The mountains are public; and God's people were to live out their faith publicly.
- The mountains are immovable; the people fickle.
- Mountains remind us of God's covenant with Moses. (Deut 4.26)

v. 3: You can hear the tenderness of the rebuke, "Oh my people."

- "What have I done to you?"
- "How have I wearied you?"

Notice the Lord doesn't give them a long list of grievances (which he could have done)

- The language is more personal.
- "Why are you acting like the Lord let you down?"
- "Why have you found it tiresome to be my people?"

"Answer me!" — but there is no answer.

Hearing no answer, the Lord then calls on them to consider his work for them in the past.

Four Examples of "the righteous acts of the Lord" (v. 5)

(1) deliverance, (2) guidance, (3) intervention, and (4) completion

These examples point us to the salvation we have in Christ Jesus, the greatest of God's saving acts: Christ dying and rising for our salvation.

It is when we consider the gospel that our devotion to the Lord is renewed.

Example 1: Deliverance (v. 4a)

- Remember the Exodus! "I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery"
- This was the greatest act of salvation in the OT and it is a type and foreshadowing of the greater exodus we have in the one who was greater than Moses.
- God says, "I haven't let you down; I actually brought you up!"
- He brought them up from the muddy Nile, and brought them through the red sea.
- He rescued them from slavery.

- The people release this mighty act throughout Scripture
 - For instance, **Psalm 77** is a community lament, and it's about a time in which the people are in a low condition. After lamenting his situation for the first half of the Psalm, Asaph says, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord... I will ponder all your work... with your arm you redeemed your people..." This look back inspires hope in the present.

Likewise, we have been brought up from the pit through Jesus Christ and delivered from slavery to sin, works righteousness, and idolatry. We need to remember the deeds of the Lord regularly.

- We were helpless and hopeless but we have been rescued!
- "We have been delivered from the domain and darkness and transferred into the kingdom of his beloved son." (**Col 1:12-13**)
 - **Will Smith**, "I looked to my kingdom I was finally there to sit on my throne..."
- In response, we offer up our lives in grateful obedience to God.

Example 2: Guidance (4b)

- God not only brought them deliverance; he gave them guidance to the Promised Land through the provision of leaders.
 - Moses was the **lawgiver** who taught them how to live.
 - Aaron was the high priest who made atonement for their sins.
 - Miriam, their sister, was the one who led the women in singing of God's rescue.
- So **they weren't delivered and then left to figure things out on their own.**
- **And neither are we:** we have **God's Word and Spirit to guide us home. (2 Pet 1:19)**
 - **God is** at work in our lives; he gives us community; leaders and teachers.
- God doesn't redeem us to leave us; He is with us every step of the way.
 - **Psalm 73:23-24:** "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory."

Example 3: Intervention (5a)

- **Remember Balak and Balaam** (Num 22-24), a story which reminds the Israelites that the Lord longs to bless rather than curse them.
- Balak the king of Moab felt threatened by Israel so he tried to get the prophet Balaam to curse Israel, but the Lord would only give Balaam words of blessing.
- He turned a curse into a blessing
- God intervened; he was overseeing through journey to the Promised Land.
- **I'm sure you can think of times in which the Lord intervened in a crisis, blessing you in a challenging time.**

2 Tim 4:15-18: 16 At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Example 4: Completion (5b)

- **Remember the crossing the Jordan!** God finishes what he starts!
- Shittim (East of the Jordan) was the last place Israel camped before crossing the Jordan; Gilgal the first place they camped after crossing (West).
- **The point: God was faithful then; God was gracious; God fulfilled his promise.**
- The journey to the Promise Land was complete, a **foreshadowing of new creation.**

Likewise believers in Jesus Christ can say, “He who began a good work in you, will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil 1:6)

- **Remember what God has done for you in Christ; and rejoice in all that God will do for you in Christ!**

And why did he do this? “That you may know the righteous acts of the Lord” (5c)

But righteous acts will only change the way you live now, **if you remember them!**

- And to **remember** them, in the biblical sense, is to actualize them in the present.
- This is one of the purposes of preaching: to **remind** you of the gospel.
- This is why we take the **Lord’s Supper**: “Do this in **remembrance** of me.”
- So that it may inspire devotion to God.

We say this to each other: **“Remember the gospel!”**

- You have been delivered from worse bondage than to that of Pharaoh!
- You have guidance now for the journey!
- You have a God who longs to bless you!
- Your God will complete what he began in you!

What will motivate a life of justice and mercy?

- Grace. Redemption.
- Vision of New creation.
- Guilt won’t motivate – it’s not a big enough engine to fuel a life of sustained faithfulness.
- Grace will.

What motivates obedience/ faithfulness; and justice is the gospel.

- A failure to care for the least, the last, and the lost, reveals that a person hasn’t begun to have the gospel worked down into their hearts.
- People who stand in awe of the mercy of God, show mercy to others.
- **“Be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful.”**
- **The more I understand the grace of God, the more generous I become, the more hospitable I become, the more merciful I become, selfless I become.**

#2: Requirements (6:6-8)

What do you get the person that has everything?

Perhaps you face that at Christmas time?

What do we give to God in light of all that he has done for us and all that he has for us?

That's the question in **verse 6**: What should I bring to the Lord?

The Answer Micah Gives:

Covenant faithfulness consists not in empty ritual, but in three proper expressions of loving obedience: justice, mercy, and humility.

But the people are ready to give God everything expect obedience to him.

Three kinds of sacrifices are mentioned:

6: Sacrifice of Quality

- Burnt offerings were not like the fellowship offerings in that the whole animal was sacrificed; a portion of the fellowship offering was returned to the worshiper.
- A year old calf was worth a year's worth of labor and food.
- Is this what we give to God in response to his grace? No.

7a: Sacrifice of Quantity

- One thinks here of the offerings of Solomon — a thousand burnt offerings (1 King 3:4); 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep (1 Kings 8:63).
- Is this the kind of thing God is looking for? No.

7b: Sacrifice of the Firstborn

- Child sacrifice was and is an abomination to the Lord.
- It was part of the idolatrous worship to Molech.
- Baal worshipers also participated in it.
- Is this how you get atonement for sins? Is this what the Lord requires? No.
- **And the NT shows us what God has done for the sin of our soul: he has put forward His Son in our place.**

8: What God Requires: Grateful Obedience

- “[This verse] is the finest summary of the content of practical religion to be found in the OT.” [NAC]
- “The rabbis who commented on this verse in the early centuries of the Christian era called it a one line summary of the whole Law.” [NAC]
- “One of the most timeless expressions of OT ethics” (EBC)

What does God want? Faithfulness/Obedience/Our Hearts/Our Lives.

A. Justice

Misphat – used some **200 times in the OT**

In **Deuteronomy 10**, Justice involves **treating people fairly; not showing favoritism, not taking bribes, giving justice to orphans, widows, strangers.**

This is our word, don't let culture high jack it. Our God is the God of justice.

His justice is magnified throughout Scripture and in the gospel itself (“just and justifier”, Rom 3).

There’s an echo of Micah 6:8 in the words of **Jesus** to the religious leaders:

Matthew 23:23–24: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

Luke 11:42, “You neglected 'justice and the love of God’

Israel was to be a community of justice

- **Psalm 82** speaks of the leaders’ role
- Numerous other passages about God’s people being called to do justice (**Isaiah 1**), **not only to reflect God’s character but also as a witness to the nations.**
- **Amos 4** - “**hear this, you cows of Bashan** (plump and healthy) who oppress the poor and crush the needy”... he goes to speak of the consequences of their oppression...

Amos 5:21–24 (The Message)

“I can’t stand your religious meetings.
I’m fed up with your conferences and conventions.
I want nothing to do with your religion projects,
your pretentious slogans and goals.
I’m sick of your fund-raising schemes,
your public relations and image making.
I’ve had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.
When was the last time you sang to me?
Do you know what I want?
I want justice—oceans of it.
I want fairness—rivers of it.
That’s what I want. That’s all I want.”

It is a broad term that elsewhere involves...

- **Having personal integrity in relationships, at work or school.**
- **Treating people fairly.**
- **Using your influence for those who have no influence**
- **Giving People their rights**
- **Having right relationships.**
- **Respecting others**

“Wearing Justice” Job 29:12-16 — it’s a way of life.

See: *Generous Justice // Ordinary (Ordinario!)*; originally titled Everyday Justice, 2015

This theme culminates with the coming of **Messiah**, who will end all oppression as he ushers in shalom. “He will bring forth justice to the nations” (**Isa 42**)

The longing for justice is ultimately a longing for Jesus.

*Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother;
And in his name, shall all oppression cease.*

B. Mercy/Kindness

Kindness/mercy/faithfulness, *Chesed*.

To freely and willingly show kindness and goodness to others.

- Notice that we are **“love it”** (Micah 7:18)
- **It really speaks to the attitude of works of justice.**
- **Exodus 34:6** – As a description of the Character of God
- **Prov 3:3** shows us how to do it... Let it become part of your nature (3b). "Put it around your neck." In other words, **don't forget it. Put it in your heart.**
- **Keller defines Mercy ministry: “Meeting needs through deeds”**

What might this look like

- **Caring for those with Covid!**
- **Supporting the single mother**
- **Bringing joy to the widow's heart.**
- **Caring for orphans**
- **Feeding the hungry**
- **Praying with the dying**
- **Advocating for the unborn**
- **Advocating for the enslaved**
- **Giving medical care to the diseased**
- **Helping the unemployed**
- **Visiting prisoners**
- **Caring for and welcoming refugees**
- **Counseling the abused**
- **Comforting the grieving**
- **Serving the elderly**
- **Caring for the mentally ill**
- **Tutoring the underprivileged**
- **Ministering to juvenile delinquents**
- **Caring for the disabled**
- **Welcoming international students**
- **Ministering to the addicted**
- **Aiding victims of disaster**
- **Reforming broken social structures**
- **Doing aftercare for rescued victims of trafficking**
- **Fighting child labor, child pornography, and child prostitution**
- **Fighting gender identity**
- **Seeking racial reconciliation**
- **Planting Churches! (A work of justice)**
- **Equipping Leaders to continue the work!**
- **Praying**

C. Humility

Loving God means walking with God.

- Every day we are to walk humbly before him.
- It's really here where gratitude and obedience flow.
- One who humbly loves God and walks with him; not away from him; not cold toward him.

This is not the usual word for “**humility**” but seems to carry the idea of being humble in the sense of **being attentive, careful and wise**, as we consider his holiness and grace.

- Walk under the Lord's will.
- Micah is warning against doing things your own way!
- He is warning against living carelessly.

We walk humbly, wisely, attentively, as we gaze on the beauty of Jesus Christ, our Messiah, who is revealed in Holy Scripture.

- The one who was humble.
- The one who was mindful of the least of these.
- The one who was mindful of us.
- The one who had all glory, yet humbled himself for the good of those who could not save themselves.

“Oh the Wonderful Cross” — Love so amazing, demands my life, my soul, my all!

- Jesus did Micah 6:8 perfectly.
- He died for those who have not obeyed Micah 6:8.
- He forgives us from all our injustice.
- He makes us new, and empowers us to do justice and mercy.
- He promises to come and make all things new, as he rules forever.

Who is like our God? Micah asks. Answer? No one.

Lest we ever wonder, we merely look to the cross and see how God has God has

- Pardoned our iniquity
- Passed over our transgression
- Had compassion on us
- Stomped our iniquities in the ground
- Cast our sins into the depth of the sea

May this good news motivate us to be a people who are known for doing good deeds of justice and mercy, and who proclaim the good news of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The One who is himself, our Peace. He will bring justice to the nations.