

# “God Wants You to be Just, Kind and a Humble Friend ”

Micah 6:1-8, Matthew 5:3 & 5, John 14:6

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Life is a series of discoveries enlightening us to discover who we are, who we belong to, and how to enjoy abundant life.

A very proper woman went to a coffeehouse one day during her lunch hour. She sat at a table for two, ordered a cup of coffee, and prepared to eat a small package of cookies that she had brought in her purse. Because the place was crowded, a man happened to take the other chair and also ordered a cup of coffee. The woman sat there leisurely reading her paper; and as she did so, she reached over and took one of the cookies from the package. Before long, she noticed that the man across the table also helped himself to a cookie. This disturbed the woman, but she politely decided to ignore it and kept reading. After a while she took another cookie. And so did he. This unnerved the woman, and she proceeded to glare at the man. To her astonishment, rather than apologizing, the gentleman reached for the fifth and final cookie. He smiled and offered her half of it. Well, by this time, she was indignant. She paid her bill and left in a hurry, enraged at such a presumptuous individual. Still muttering under her breath she fished through her purse for the car keys, and to her dismay, she found her own package of cookies-unopened. It had been the gentleman's cookies all along! She was embarrassed yet comforted by the kindness of the gentleman to not only share his cookies but smile at her glare. As she reflected upon his compassion and humility, she was able to laugh at herself.

The Israelites had an identity crisis. **Micah 6:1-8 (NLT)** “Listen to what the LORD is saying: “Stand up and state your case against me. Let the mountains and hills be called to witness your complaints. And now, O mountains, listen to the LORD's complaint! God has a case against God's people. God will bring charges against Israel. “O my people, what have I done to you? What have I done to make you tired of me? Answer me! For I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to help you. Don't you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead? And remember your journey from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, when I, the LORD, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.” What can we bring to the LORD? What kind of offerings should we give God? Should we bow before God with offerings of yearling calves? Should we offer God thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins? No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what God requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

The Israelites have forgotten who they are. They are beloved children of God, saved from slavery, guided to the Promised Land, forgiven of sin, pardoned for grumblings, and blessed with abundance. They were stealing cookies from the poor and glaring at them when they tried to better their lives.

Our scripture opens with the Israelites and each of us on trial in the grand court of the cosmos. We plead our case before the majestic mountains. Some worship the creation instead of

God the creator. Some built alters on the mountains to other gods. Some worship money, success, security, control, or sex. We plead our case before the hills where we live. Some try to control everything, leading to a sense of mine, of ownership, that it is our stuff, our house, our hill. The mountains and hills see how we live, see every time we shamelessly help ourselves to what belongs to God which is to be shared by everyone. The prophet Micah viewed the personal accumulation of stuff, the failure to share, as a willful assault against God's desire for justice among God's children. The mountains and the hills confirm our guilt.

God now asks us what God has done to deserve our ingratitude, defiance and rebellion. God is always gracious to us, so we do not have a single complaint.

God reveals our forgetfulness. God has freed us from slavery and sin. God has freed us from death to everlasting life. God references some places that may be unfamiliar to you. They were campsites where God blessed the Israelites on the way to the Promised Land. Times when God revealed grace, healing, and how to live so all can enjoy abundant life. The campsite where they first entered the Promised Land, celebrated and covenanted with God to worship God, to love God, to love each other, to do justice, love kindness and enjoy abundant life as they walked humbly with God. These places reminded them of God's loving care, eagerness to protect them, constant guidance away from harm to safe abundance. Our forgetfulness that we belong to God, short memory of God's blessings, care and protection, lack of thankfulness, and desire to own and consume for ourselves what belongs to God, condemns us. When someone refuses to see how fortunate they are and begins to take God's gifts for granted, the cosmos groans over the damage we inflict.

God is not pleased with hollow worship, thoughtless practices, or sacrifices. God is pleased with justice, loving kindness, and a humble walk with God. We are invited by God to refresh our memory, to rediscovery love and embrace God.

Listen again to God's word this time from the Message. **Micah 6:1-8 MSG** “**Listen now, listen to GOD: “Take your stand in court. If you have a complaint, tell the mountains; make your case to the hills. And now, Mountains, hear GOD’s case; listen, Jury Earth—For I am bringing charges against my people. I am building a case against Israel. “Dear people, how have I done you wrong? Have I burdened you, worn you out? Answer! I delivered you from a bad life in Egypt; I paid a good price to get you out of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you—and Aaron and Miriam to boot! Remember what Balak king of Moab tried to pull, and how Balaam son of Beor turned the tables on him. Remember all those stories about Shittim and Gilgal. Keep all GOD’s salvation stories fresh and present.” How can I stand up before GOD and show proper respect to the high God? Should I bring an armload of offerings topped off with yearling calves? Would GOD be impressed with thousands of rams, with buckets and barrels of olive oil? Would God be moved if I sacrificed my firstborn child, my precious baby, to cancel my sin? But God’s already made it plain how to live, what to do, what GOD is looking for in men and women. It’s quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don’t take yourself too seriously—take God seriously.**

In a time when people had largely forgotten God and who they were. In a time when one’s relationship with God was reduced to religion, to efforts to placate God by complex systems of sacrifice, the prophet Micah spoke for God. **Micah 6:8** “**What does the Lord require but to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God?”**

How does one walk humbly with God? The Beatitude **Matthew 5:5** “**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth;**” expands our understanding. Pastor Carl Schenck said. “I

think Jesus may have been saying, "Blessed are those who do not take themselves too seriously." One of the most complicating things that we can do in life is to think that we are indispensable. It plays havoc with our lives. It plays havoc if we think we are the only ones who can accomplish something of value in the world. It comes as a terrible disappointment to some of us to understand that we are not the center of the universe. It is disappointing to some, but we are not. God is the center. Our lives are so much better; and, in some sense the whole world is ours when we know that the whole world is God's, and it rides on God's shoulders, not ours. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who simply know that they are not the most important people in the world. Blessed are those who simply know they ought not to take themselves too seriously.

Carl goes on to connect walking humbly with God to another beatitude. **Matthew 5:3** **"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."** Carl said. "If there is a paradoxical Beatitude, it is this one. Have you ever thought of all the apparent contradictions in that little sentence? Blessed are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. How in the world do you equate poverty of soul and Heaven? They do not seem to go together, and to make it even stranger, Jesus is recommending poverty of spirit. It seems Jesus would recommend richness of soul. Part of the paradoxical nature of this Beatitude can be seen when we think of its reverse. Do you know anyone who thinks they are rich in spirit? Do you know anyone who is so sure that they have the doctrines, the liturgies, Bible studies, and their view of God and prayer life just right? They are sure they can tell you God's will, who is in and out and how God wants you to live. If you know anyone like that, do they love all people, do they listen to others, and are they gracious, are they striving to grow their relationship? Jesus, in a way, is saying, "Blessed are those who know they don't know it all. Blessed are those who understand that they don't know God well enough. Blessed are those who understand that the love of their heart is not great enough. Blessed are those who know and acknowledge that they have still a long, long, long way to go in life. Blessed are those who, at the very center and core of their being, have the humility of simplicity. Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

Walk humbly with God. God is with us and ahead of us. Life is best when we put God in charge and let God lead the way. Jesus said **John 14:6** **"I am the way the truth and the life."** Jesus invites us to follow him through life, the ups, downs, plateaus, joys and dry places to discover abundant life. Jesus invites us to follow him. Frederich Buechner said. "True humility doesn't mean thinking ill of ourselves, but of not thinking of ourselves much differently from the way we would think of anybody else." Humility is this peculiar combination of being cleansed of excessive pride and arrogance, and of claiming our absolute dependence on God.

**Micah 6:8 "What does the Lord require but to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God?"**

Love kindness. Kindness is the evidence and manifestation of love. It is one of the obvious indicators of God's spirit in our lives. Kindness is sharing your cookies with a stranger even after she glares at you.

Kindness is a weak translation of the Hebrew word used by Micah which conveys love, loyalty, grace, faithfulness, devotion. It is the bond that holds all healthy fulfilling relationships together. A rabbi illustrates kindness as a bone-weary father who drives through the night to bail his drug-addict son out of jail. Kindness is a mom who spends day after thankless day spoon-feeding and wiping up after a sick child. Kindness is an unsung wife whose passionate prayers and encouragement keeps her exhausted husband from falling apart at the seams. Kindness is love that builds up and grows decade after decade. Love kindness is keeping forgiveness and a steadfast, loyal, ever sure bond at the center of your relationships. God loves us with the fullness

of kindness and more; therefore, we are to love God and each other with this type of loving kindness.

**Micah 6:8 "What does the Lord require but to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God?"**

Do Justice. Often when we hear justice we think of a courtroom process and the legal system or each person getting what they deserve. Micah is urging us to live a grandeur justice. Treating all people with fairness, respect, and compassion. Justice is seeking to build up every person, to leave each person we encounter a more joyful person. Justice is addressing and solving the causes of suffering and need in the world. Justice is a hands-on daily commitment to make the world a better place, to bring heaven to earth.

Martin Luther King, Jr., said that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." God's justice to us always gives us way more than we deserve. God gives us life, abundant life, eternal life. No matter how much we rebel God forgives and welcomes us home to God's cleansing love. No matter how much we destroy and hurt God cleans up our mess, heals, restores and renews. God even gives us way more than we need. God provides all we desire to flourish, shine, and soar with glory. This is the justice we are to provide for all people.

Doing justice and loving kindness enhances our humble walk with God which enables us to do more justice and more loving kindness in an ever growing spiral. The Christian life is a journey, as you do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God you discover yourself, the joy of belonging to God and how to live into the beauty of abundant life. You are able to share your cookies with a stranger who is stealing them. You are able to smile when she glares at you. You are able to exude loving kindness which enables her to laugh at her mistake. Doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God enables you to help every person deepen their joy, including yourself. Amen