

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday August 14th, 2022
Guest Worship Leader: Rev. Beryl Orok

Attributes of Christian Living
Micah 6:1-8

Welcome
Announcements

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Friends, let us worship God today, for God is great.
God has blessed us with life, with faith and with community.
Let us worship God today, for God is good.
God forgives us, encourages us, empowers us and loves us.
Let us worship God today--
Because we are God's people.
Let us worship God together and rejoice.
Amen.

Prayer of Adoration

Great God, our creator we come into this place today acknowledging that You are a God of both justice and mercy.
You promised us that Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light;
Not because the path you lead us on in life is never hard,
But because You bear every burden with us.
In this precious time of worship open our hearts to hear your words of comfort, but also of challenge, so that we may be sustained and transformed,
Open our hearts to Your Spirit of truth that we might love all people with a love that speaks of justice, kindness and radical grace. May this time of worship be authentic to You God, and as the people of God may we bear much good fruit for Your glory.
Amen.

Opening Hymn # 655: "Give Me Oil In My Lamp"

Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning
Give me oil in my lamp I pray
Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning
Keep me burning till the break of day
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna

Sing hosanna to the Servant King
 Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
 Sing hosanna let us sing

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
 Give me joy in my heart, I pray,
 Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising
 Keep me praising till the break of day.
 Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
 Sing hosanna to the Servant King
 Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
 Sing hosanna let us sing

Call to Confession: Psalm 145

Our God is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and filled with unfailing love. He is close to all who call upon His name in truth, listening for their cries for help and offering them salvation.
 So, let's bring our confession to God; knowing that He will hear our prayers and forgive
Amen.

Prayer of Confession

We come to you Lord at this time remembering our many failures and mistakes; the many times we have failed to be the strong people of God You have called us to be. But such groveling accomplishes nothing until we realize that by the fire of your Spirit and the washing of Your Blood we are cleaned and renewed. You have created us with bodies, minds and spirits to do good in this world and to bring Your message to the world around us. You have shaped personalities with strengths and abilities that exist for the purpose of serving You and You alone. In the quiet of this moment, we rededicate ourselves to You thru repentance and commit to becoming sanctified by the work of Your Spirit within us. Silent confession Dear Lord please accept us as we come to You and work Your transforming power in our lives for Your glory. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God has called us and blesses us when we live His ways and not the ways of the world. God's love embraces us even when we fall short of His desires for us. Know that the God of blessing loves and forgives us with a fierce tenderness. Walk confidently in the overshadowing of His Spirit; knowing we are forgiven and that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives. Praise be to God!
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in heaven
 Hallow'ed is Thy name; Thy kingdom come;
 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread and forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.
 Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one.
 For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Responsive Reading: Psalm 116

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
 He heard my cry for mercy.
 Because he turned his ear to me,
 I will call on him as long as I live*
 What shall I return to the Lord?
 for all his goodness to me
**I will lift up the cup of salvation
 and call on the name of the Lord.**
 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord
 in the presence of all his people.
 This is the word of the Lord.

Ministry of Music: "Be Thou My Vision" by Melissa Valliquette

Prayer of Illumination

Spirit of God, open our minds and hearts to receive God's wisdom in the Scriptures.
 Show us how to live out that wisdom and our calling today, tomorrow and always as we
 follow Jesus, who is for us God's Living Word. **Amen.**

Scripture

Micah 6: 1-8

¹Listen to what the LORD says: "Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. ²Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. ³My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. ⁴I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. ⁵My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered.

Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD." ⁶With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Children's Hymn # 648: "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"

I'm gonna live so, God can use me
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.
I'm gonna live so, God can use me
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.

I'm gonna sing so, God can use me
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.
I'm gonna sing so, God can use me
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.

Sermon

Some say the prophets are all basically saying the same thing. Lots of doom and gloom! Others say they are too confusing and somewhat irrelevant to our modern-day society.

Prophetic books cover over one-quarter the Bible. Since we are no longer under the Law of Moses, some assume we no longer need to study the Old Testament. As a result, Micah along with the other 11 Minor Prophets, is often overlooked. Yet it is a beautiful book and a literary masterpiece, containing the very words of our Triune God and they are treasures and blessedness forever.

The darkness of sin seems so flagrant in our world and society. This very same atmosphere forms the backdrop to the Old Testament book of Micah. Now the one thing most of us do remember (because we are reminded of it each Christmas) is that Micah was known to prophecy where the birthplace of Jesus would be:

Chapter 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Sounds familiar I'm sure. But there is so much more this little book is important and relevant for, and we will only scan the surface today.

There is little known about Micah himself beyond his name and his place of birth and residence. It is said that he lived his life in a rural village in the lowlands of Judah near Palestine during the 8th century. He was known as Micah the Morishite and the duration of his prophetic life took place over the reign of three different Kings of Judah—Jotham, being one of the worst kings, Ahaz, who set up a foreign altar in God’s temple where he sacrificed his own children, and Hezekiah, who was one of the best of Judah’s Kings. Micah lived in one of the darkest times in Israel’s history; a time of brutal warfare and rampant sin. The nation of Israel had been split into North and South and Micah saw war break out amongst them. Micah recognized that God was punishing these nations for their sins yet he perceived a majestic God, who punished His people to purify and restore them. The promises and the challenging confronts of Micah’s message are interwoven because, even during the reign of the wicked kings, he preached comfort, and during the pious reign he preached conviction.

He never stopped sharing the message of God as the Spirit of God led him. Reminds me of Paul’s exhortation to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:2 “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”

This is applicable to all of us, in every generation, and in every circumstance, we find ourselves facing in life. We are to be always listening for the leading of the Holy Spirit as He directs how and when to share His message. We are certainly not all called to be prophets, but we are called to be disciples.

Micah, not unlike Isaiah, confronted Jerusalem, who had become falsely confident that no evil would befall them because of the presence of the Holy Temple in their midst.

If our secure feelings of salvation are centered on facts such as, being found to worship in a certain church building, or associated with a certain community of believers, or centered on religious practices, then we are not secure. These things cannot save us from our sins.

Biblical history tells us that not even the temple itself, situated on Mt Zion, would be spared God’s wrath when He allowed the Babylonians to take over Jerusalem and likewise the Assyrians to take over Judah. God in His holiness cannot ignore sin; yet He forever and always extended, as He does today, mercy in His intention to fulfill His promises and covenant to Abraham and our salvation through Christ.

Both Israel and Judah had repeatedly broken their covenant with God; their sins were many and they were flagrant.

In Chapters 1-7 God is speaking of the sins of the people.

Idolatry 1:7 New International Version (NIV) 7 All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used."

Evil plans 2; 1¹Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.

Coveting, violence oppression 2:2 ²They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud people of their homes; they rob them of their inheritance.

Hating good and loving evil. Micah 3:2, NLT: "but you are the very ones who hate good and love evil. You skin my people alive and tear the flesh from their bones."

Greedy priests and prophets alike 3:11 "You rulers make decisions based on bribes; you priests teach God's laws only for a price; you prophets won't prophesy unless you are paid. Yet all of you claim to depend on the LORD. 'No harm can come to us,' you say, 'for the LORD is here among us.'" (They had appointed prophets who tickled their ears with what they wanted to hear)

Deceit: 6: 11, "Can I justify wicked scales and a bag of deceptive weights?

Unfaithfulness 7:2 The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

Family friction 7:6 For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies are the members of his own household.

The essential message of the word of the Lord remains unchanged throughout the Bible; whether we are reading about the patriarch Abraham, the apostle Paul, Deborah the Judge, or Mary the mother of Jesus. God will not tolerate sin, but always provides a way back to Him.

Scripture, through the work of the Holy Spirit, puts a spotlight on sin in our lives too, but we are not left exposed and despairing because there is a way to be cleansed and renewed through the blood of Christ; even Micah spoke clearly of the salvation of God.

Now focusing primarily on Chapter 6 from our scripture readings today we note that it begins with a summons. Almighty God is holding court!

This section is in a judicial format:

Micah 6:2, NIV: Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.

This summons is a powerful one! This is reference is in relation to the mountains on which the people worshipped their idols. In other words, God is crying out – if the careless people will not hear me then the rocks that have no ears where you sacrifice to your idols –you hear!

It's very clear that God has a quarrel with his people and court is in session. This is a picture of God that many hearers aren't fond of –God as a plaintiff, a prosecuting attorney, a stern judge, but this is part of the biblical revelation of our covenant God. He is not only full of lovingkindness, mercy and grace, but also steeped in justice.

God opens court with reminders of what He has done for the nation of Israel.

Chapter 7 verse 3 begins with God's question "My people, what have I done to you? (In other words: Is your sin somehow my fault? Did I do something wrong that led you astray. Was I unfair or unkind in some way?")

How have I burdened you? Answer me.

**4 I brought you up out of Egypt
and redeemed you from the land of slavery.**

**I sent Moses to lead you,
also Aaron and Miriam.**

**5 My people, remember
what Balak king of Moab plotted?
and what Balaam son of Beor answered. (God had used Balak's personal prophet
against him to help the Israelites, with some help of a donkey as well)**

**Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."**

With these words God is saying: I provided for your every need and did only righteous acts on your behalf -- you know this –but then you broke my laws and assimilated into the pagan land and followed their practices and served their gods. God is jogging their memory and trying to appeal to their conscience. When we are tempted or in distress, we need to remind ourselves of the goodness and faithfulness of God in our lives; not just the thought or that well-worn expression that God is good ---but specifics of how and when God has been good and faithful to us! It's a definite way of drawing us back to the path of God's will as we humbly begin to realize just how much God has done for us and how much He loves us.

Even after all these reminders of the grace and goodness of God –what do the people do?

They automatically began to justify themselves with an extravagant defense.

Micah 6:6-7:

With what shall I come before the Lord?

and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings?

with calves a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams?

with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression?

the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

In other words: Just what do you want of us?

Their declarations; reflect the laws of sacrifice, but go far beyond into evil itself. There is notable arrogance and sarcasm in their response. The offerings they relate to God increase in cost and volume from offering of a year-old calf to thousands of rams, 10,000 rivers of oil, finally ending in the horrendous mention of child sacrifice; reflecting their worship of idol Molod and mocking God.

Will the Lord be pleased they ask? From the absurd to the forbidden they attempt to make a point--we are religious God; what do you want of us!! Wow! They are sadly lacking in the fear of the Lord!

In all fairness the Old Testament God did require sacrifices. The Torah clearly outlines the specifics of such sacrifices. However, it is important to note that these sacrifices were never intended to be used as a ladder to heaven: or a way to appease an angry God. They were never intended to replace the obligation of the ethical high mark of the Hebrew faith. They were to be an act of worship, reverence and penance leading to repentance.

Then God in His patience, love and perseverance tells His people through Micah exactly what He wants. This is our text for today;

Micah 6:8 NIV: He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

He is saying ---you act as if it is some mystery what I require of you when in fact I have shown you clearly what is good and what I require of you.

In the darkest moments of history, and still today, God always offers hope. His people failed him again and again --- just as many of us fail Him daily. Yet the story never ends there. Our miracle working, life transforming God desires to change our hearts and lives into a living representation of Himself; a light in a world that so desperately needs God.

Romans 12:1-2 A Living Sacrifice 1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God— this is your true and proper worship.

Let’s take a look at living with the justice, mercy and humility because that is what being a living sacrifice all is about.

What does justice mean? Simply put it means “to make right”. It is a relational term, which makes sense because God is a relational God. He sent Jesus to die for our sins so that we can be restored to right relationship with Him. Jesus is the righteous judge who was judged in our place for our sins. It has been said that morality and immorality is birthed in the human heart; but justice is centered in God’s heart.

The bible gives us many references to justice:

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew 23 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.

James 1:27 ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Proverbs 29:7 the righteous consider the cause of the poor, but the wicked have no regard for such concerns. The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern. The godly care about the rights of the poor; the wicked don’t care at all.

When a body of believers focuses on personal morality to the exclusion of social justice, we are falling short of God’s plan and purpose for His church. We need to be mindful individually and corporately to purposefully live –doing justice.

The second requirement of God is to love mercy: Mercy is referred to 28 times in the New Testament alone.

In a recent Bible study we attended with Walter, Chuck Swindol chose to focus on a translation of Micah 6:8 using the word kindness in place of mercy and his sermon challenged us about choosing kindness in our interactions with others; acknowledging that it is not always easy to be kind. We have to consciously choose to do so.

I feel mercy definitely has a component that is kindness, but I believe it goes farther than just being kind or having a desire to care. Someone has said “don’t’ just show mercy, but love to show mercy” Extending towards others the same measure of mercy you want to receive from God. Mercy is also a subset of grace; it is the act of withholding punishment, while grace is the act of imparting unmerited favor. In His mercy God does not give to us the punishment we deserve; while in his grace He gives us the gift we do not deserve: eternal life through Christ Jesus. Mercy and grace are two sides of the same coin. We need both God’s mercy and grace. Mercy is compassion in action. It also relates to forgiveness. We think of the mercy God has shown us thru Christ. Finally: mercy imparts a blessing to those who are unworthy! That would be all of us.

The 3rd requirement stated is “Walk humbly with your God.”

Humility is: recognizing who we are in Christ. That knowledge, above anything else, is humbling.

Charles Spurgeon once said: “I do not advise any of you to try and be humble, but to be humble.” To act humbly is a mere act and as Spurgeon went on to say ---is hypocritical.

Humility must be in the heart, so that it overflows into every decision and action we perform. True humility is not having demeaning thoughts about ourselves; but rather knowing and acknowledging exactly who we are in Christ. That is: beloved children of God saved and sanctified through the blood of Jesus.

There is an organization called Food for the Hungry—perhaps you have heard of it. They have offices around the world. The words of Micah 6:8 were beloved by the founder Dr. Larry Ward.

He founded the organization on the concept that mercy can be shown to one person at a time, by one person at a time. This insight he gained after spending time pouring his heart out to God because he was so moved by the poor and hungry in the world, yet felt overwhelmed concerning how he, just one person, could help. He recognized that without God’s grace he would be utterly useless to address the injustices he witnessed.

Dr. Ward was known for his humility. He was known to be fond of Psalm 34:6 “This poor man cried out to the Lord ---and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his trouble.

He founded Food for the Hungry over 50 years ago and their motto has not changed. Apparently if you were to walk into any of their offices you would see Micah 6: 8 boldly

displayed on a plaque on the wall for all to see. The workers for the organization also wear Micah; 6: 8 on their t-shirts.

Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God! Let's commit to making Micah 6:8 a hallmark of how we live our lives.

Let us pray:

Give us O Lord, eyes to see injustice. For it is only when we are able to recognize injustice and feel its awful sting that we will be moved to make things right.

Give us O Lord a tender heart. May our hearts be softened and enable us by Your Spirit to recognize when we have been unkind, uncaring and uncompassionate. May we extend to others the mercy you have extended to us in our lives.

Grant us a clear vision God of who we are in Christ; forgiven, beloved and blessed so that we may work as Your humble servants in Your kingdom

Teach us daily Lord to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with You on our life journey.
Amen

Invitation to Offering

We have been called to live lives of justice, love and truth. We have been blessed to be a blessing.

Let us generously offer all that we are and our gifts this day to further the kingdom of God! **Amen.**

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

Almighty God, You have called us by name. You have led us here, into Your presence this day, fed us the truth and power of Your holy word and now you compel in us a response.

Left to ourselves and our own doings we would flounder and abandon Your calling; but Your Holy Spirit emboldens us to name You as Lord and to offer gifts to You.

Receive our lives, our gifts and our energies and may they be blended so that we as a community might serve You with great fervor and joy. For Jesus's sake, **Amen.**

Closing Hymn: "Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me"

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
 There is no more for heaven now to give
 He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
 My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace
 To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
 For my life is wholly bound to His
 Oh how strange and divine, I can sing, "All is mine"
 Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
 For He has said that He will bring me home
 And day by day I know He will renew me
 Until I stand with joy before the throne
 To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
 All the glory evermore to Him
 When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
 Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

Pastoral Prayer

Father of mercy, we come to you each day with a desperate need of Your mercy; grateful that You have promised to be available to us, new every morning.

Our town, our country and our world are experiencing various shades of anger, fear, frustration and broken hearts over so many situations leaving people homeless, orphaned and destitute; the senseless and brutal killings going on in wars around the world. We pray for our governing authorities and law enforcement officers that You would grant them wisdom to govern in a way that promotes peace and justice.

Father, we pray this morning that you would give us a holy awareness of the supremacy of Christ in the world; despite what our natural eyes can see.

Lead us as Your people to fall on our knees with hearts of contrition over sin and cries of deliverance for the oppressed. May we be ambassadors in love and humility to one another.

You have commanded us to do justice –every man, woman and child is created in your image and therefore is worthy of respect and receiving grace and mercy.

Help us to be loving, kind and compassionate to one another in both words and actions. We live in the confidence God that one day, one great day, you will finally and completely triumphant over all evil. We long to be a part of that day! But until then; we ask that you would set a fresh fire in our hearts to live in Your ways, to do all that we can for the sake of Your kingdom here on earth.

For those who are journeying through grief at this time, may they know that they are not alone. You are as close as the mention of Your name.

Loving God: We have assurance of Your caring for us and the burdens we carry. May we who are happy and rejoicing this day remember to give You thanks as every good and perfect thing comes from You.

We pray today for all those listed in our Prayers for the People. There are numerous physical problems and we don't understand why these things come into our lives; testing our strength, and even our faith at times, making us feel we have been stretched to our limit. God give them comfort and peace in the knowledge of Your abiding love.

We pray for Pastor Gerry and his family; may their time away be a time of relaxation and refreshing. Thank you for those who labor faithfully in various capacities to ensure the needs of the congregation are met.

Sovereign God: Attend to the cries of Your people, and answer our prayers we pray through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction

Those who live lives pleasing to God shall not be moved.

Go now to embrace the values of the kingdom of God—values of truth justice, mercy and love.

Go now with God's blessing and His peace to serve the Lord and each other.

Amen