

What God Requires • Micah 6:6-8

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Smiths*

1. Let me introduce you to the Smith family -
 - a. mom, dad, and three children; ages 17, 14, & 9
 - b. they go to church nearly every Sunday, and are considered to be members in good standing.
2. But things in the Smith house are *not* as they appear to the people who meet them every weekend at church.
3. Mom and Dad *seem* like people who genuinely care for each other and God
4. Their children are well-behaved and seem to enjoy Sunday school
5. But if you could be a fly on the wall of their home or in their car on the way to church, you'd see a different side of the Smiths.
 - a. if mom and dad talk to each other at all, it's usually to hurl some thinly veiled insult or snide remark.
 - b. the last time they said a kind word to each other was over a year ago on Christmas morning
 - c. the kids? – it sounds like full-scale war!
 - 1) they treat each other like mortal enemies.
 - 2) and their speech is filled with venom – every comment is another snake bite to the soul.
6. Saturday nights usually finds the house in an uproar as everyone argues with everyone else over what to watch on TV or what to make for dinner.
7. When they go to bed, each tries to have the last word, to deliver the keenest parting shot.
8. On Sunday morning, they race each other for the shower and then care not at all about leaving any hot water for the rest.
 - a. the last of the bread, butter, or cereal & milk becomes another hill to wage war over
 - b. then they climb in the car and fight all the way to church.
 - c. but an interesting transformation takes place the moment they drive into the parking lot – they become saints!
 - d. a little halo springs in to the air above their heads and they all put on an angelic smile

9. Walking across the parking lot, mom and dad hold hands and the kids skip to the front door, whistling merry tunes.
10. They greet their friends with a cheery “Hello!” and a nod of their heads.
 - a. Dad gives the men’s ministry leader a bear hug -
 - b. while Mom heads off to sing in the choir.

B. Sad To Say

1. You know what? The Smiths might be here this morning.
2. Our passage today talks about the Smiths, and everyone else whose Christianity begins and ends at the edge of the church parking lot.

II. TEXT

- 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?**

A. Setting The Scene

1. Micah lived at the same time as the prophet Isaiah.
2. This is a period in which people maintain a religious front, but there’s no substance
 - a. they still go to the temple and make their offerings –
 - b. but as soon as they leave the temple, they’ve forgotten all about God
3. Religion was just one of many parts of their lives – and a small part at that!
4. They had come to think of Yahweh, the God of Israel, as the pagans thought of their gods
 - a. Baal was a local deity who oversaw things like the weather

- b. Asherah was the goddess of fertility
 - c. Molech was the god of power and influence
 - d. so, if you wanted rain for your crops, you went to Baal's temple and made an offering
 - e. if you wanted a child or your herds to be abundant, you visited Asherah's shrine
 - f. and if you were running for mayor, you went to see Molech
5. None of these pagan deities cared for people really – only their own reputation and area of power
 - a. consequently, no one *loved* Baal or Molech; no one adored Asherah
 - b. people just *used them* to get what they wanted
 - c. they would go to their temples and make a gift to try to persuade the god to grant them a favor.
 - d. it was business – not worship!
 6. Well, this is the way the Jews had come to think of God.
 7. The Holy One who had shown Himself to be the Creator & Lord of the entire universe -- they have now come to treat just like Baal & Molech!
 8. His worship has become business!
 - a. sacrifices and offerings are nothing more than business investments
 - b. throw God a bone and maybe my crops will be abundant
 - c. bring an ox to the temple of Yahweh and maybe I'll get elected
 - d. drop a few coins in the offering and maybe I'll get that promotion
 9. The temple was no longer a place to meet with and worship God – it was an investment house; the altar was a trade center and the priests were brokers.
 10. Because the heart and soul of faith in God had been gutted from national life, the people had become corrupt.
 11. Micah is scathing in his diagnosis of the social ills that plague the nation.
 - a. the courts were corrupt and justice was all but dead.
 - b. even common civility was disappearing from the streets.
 - c. people seemed bent on taking advantage of one another at every opportunity
 - d. the simplest of laws were repeatedly broken

- e. and any semblance of politeness was a thing of the past.
- 12. Speaking for God, Micah tells the people that the coarseness of their times is a sure sign they had long ago left Him.
- 13. In Chapter 6, God takes Israel to court.
 - a. in vs. 1-5 He says “State your case against Me.”
 - b. then He says “I have a complaint against you, for I have done all I can do for you, yet you have rejected Me. I brought you out of Egypt; I led you in the wilderness; I protected you from your enemies. What more could I have done?”
- 14. In vs. 6-7, Micah speaks on behalf of the nation – as though they are indeed convicted of their sin and desire to come back to God.
- 15. But the only way back they can think of is to keep doing the same empty religious rituals they’ve been doing all along . . .

B. Vs. 6-7

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?

1. Does God want more sacrifices?
 - a. is it animals God wants?
 - b. is there a special animal He requires - like a yearling?
 - c. maybe what He wants is just lots and lots of offerings
 - 1) would thousands of rams do?
 - 2) would a river of olive oil satisfy Him?
 - d. maybe what God wants is the very most precious thing I have – my firstborn child
 - 1) after all, that’s what Molech demanded!
 - 2) maybe God is jealous of our offerings to Molech!
 - 3) We know God’s Word *prohibits* human sacrifice, but maybe He’s changed His mind
 - 4) so now we need to give to God what we give to Molech and Baal and Asherah.

2. Is this what God wants? Will these offerings make atonement for my soul and restore me to God's favor?
3. That is Micah's question – but Micah knows this isn't what God is looking for.
4. It was in fact the stuff Israel was ALREADY doing!
5. They were still going to the temple; still making their sacrifices.
6. The smoke from the altar was as abundant as ever and the priests were employed night and day as they butchered what was brought to be placed on the altar.
7. The temple was busy – but what was done there was dead and devoid of merit simply because the heart of those who came was in completely the wrong place.
8. The proof of this was the way they treated one another when they left.
9. If our religion doesn't make us better people, then it's a dead and useless thing.
 - a. if when I leave the temple I am not more like the God I worship there, what good was it going in the first place?
 - b. worship is the means of encountering God, and if that encounter doesn't result in us being *different* – then we have to ask if we've *really* worshipped
10. This is what Micah goes on to say in v. 8 – which is one of THE most important passages in the entire Bible . . .

C. V. 8

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?

1. Micah is NOT saying that the sacrifices weren't important – they were!
2. They were a part of the law of God, given on Mt; Sinai
3. But the sacrifices were merely *external* rituals, things that God in His grace gave to the people SO THAT THEY COULD EXPRESS WHAT WAS IN THEIR HEARTS.
4. I hope you get that – let me say it again.
5. The sacrifices were simply rituals God gave to the people SO

THAT THEY COULD EXPRESS WHAT WAS IN THEIR HEARTS.

6. The blood of animals cannot atone for sin, and God isn't excited about watching some carcass burn.
7. We may enjoy the smell of a tri-tip barbecuing in the backyard, but trust me – God's mouth didn't water when an ox was placed on the altar
8. Yes, the Bible does say that the smoke ascended before Him as a sweet savor – but not because God likes barbecue – it was WHAT THE SMOKE REPRESENTED that please Him
9. The burnt offerings were supposed to be an evidence of the worshippers heart to be in communion, in fellowship with God.
10. But it was always about the heart, never the meat!
11. In 1 Samuel 15 we read the story of King Saul meeting Judge Samuel after the battle with the Amalekites.
 - a. God had commanded the complete annihilation of the Amalekites but Saul had failed to carry out the mission
 - b. he justified keeping the spoils from the battle by telling Samuel they would be offered to the Lord as a burnt offering
 - c. it was then Samuel uttered these words – and they are chilling .

..

22 Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

12. I want to ask you to take careful note of what Samuel says here because it gets to the heart of the matter for us in Micah 6
13. I doubt seriously that anyone here is a covert satan-worshipper, but what Samuel says puts rebellion on the same level as witchcraft
 - a. when I consistently disobey God, when I disregard His Word and Will, it's more than casual sin – it's rebellion!
 - b. when I purposefully ignore the prompting and conviction of the Holy Spirit and willfully choose *my* way rather than God's -

- I've become a rebel!
- c. now think about that for a moment – what's the difference between that and what Eve did in the Garden?
 - d. she faced a choice between following God or her own way.
 - e. and who encouraged her to choose her own way? – satan
 - f. are you aware of the primary commandment of Satanism – the essence of their belief system?
 - g. it's summed up in this – “Do what you will.”
14. This is what the people of Micah's day were doing – what they willed, what they wanted.
 15. And all the time they were pretending to be God-fearing visitors to the temple, bringing their offerings and making their sacrifices.
 16. But it was all a sham – a hopeless façade!
 17. In v. 8, God tells them that without the right heart, *which will be revealed in how they live*, it's all pointless, and they are no better than those who practice witchcraft.

D. What Does God Require?

1. V. 8 is crucial because it shows us what God requires of man
2. Micah says . . .

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good.

3. God's Word points us to what is good and warns us off what is ill.
4. No one need go through life wondering how to have and do what is good.
5. God has written his law on our hearts and made it crystal clear in His Word.

[So] what does the LORD require of you – Do justly

6. As with all scripture, we need to understand this in its context, both as it sits in the text, and then in its *historical setting*
 - a. to understand what Micah means by *justice*, look at vs. 10-12
- 10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness In the house of the wicked, And the short measure *that is* an abomination?**
- 11 Shall I count pure *those* with the wicked scales, And**

with the bag of deceitful weights?

12 For her rich men are full of violence, Her inhabitants have spoken lies, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

- b. as I said earlier, this was a time of widespread corruption
- c. across the board, people were cheating and stealing from one another
 - 1) merchants were using false measures
 - 2) the rich were perverting the court system and stealing from the poor by bribing unjust judges
 - 3) everywhere you looked, people were lying, cheating, and stealing
 - 4) in fact, it was *expected* that someone would try to swindle you when you went to the market – so people brought their own weights along, but whereas the merchants weights were lighter so as to give less, the buyers weights were heavier to get more.
 - 5) people moved boundary markers that set the borders of their property
 - 6) they shorted orders and made purposefully faulty merchandise so that people would have to come back for a new one in a few weeks or months
 - 7) they diluted their salt with worthless white powder and mixed weed seeds with good grain
- 7. When Micah says that God requires we do *justly*, it means that we treat others *fairly*; not with the world's idea of fairness or in the manner that rules the marketplace – but that we treat others AS WE WANT TO BE TREATED.
 - a. we don't want to be cheated, or lied to or swindled
 - b. we don't want people to look at us as targets for their scam or as merely an easy buck
 - c. we want to be respected and we want our business to be sought after with integrity.
 - d. we want to do business with people we can trust, and not worry that trusting them is playing the part of being a sucker
 - e. when we buy a pound of butter – we expect it to be 16 oz, not 15½.

- f. when we buy a box of cereal, we expect it to have more than 10 flakes in it
 - 1) yes, we know the contents will settle in shipping
 - 2) but not to a 1/3 of the volume of the box!
- g. if we buy bottled water, we expect it to have been properly filtered and purified, not stuck under a tap in Tecate, Mexico.
- h. and if we take our SUV to the mechanic for repairs, we expect the work we are paying for to be done as the invoice promises!
- 8. To do justly means that we treat others as we want to be treated – with dignity and respect – realizing every person we meet is the object of God’s infinite love and a bearer of His image.
- 9. To cheat them, is to cheat the God who created them for His pleasure!

<p>To love mercy,</p>

- 10. Note that, not just to *do* mercy, but *love* it!
- 11. Mercy is to be more than a filter through which we deal with others, giving them the benefit of the doubt and not pretending to read their minds and knowing their intentions and motivations.
- 12. We are to *love* mercy.
 - a. we delight in what we love; we embrace what we love
 - b. mercy is to be the mode in which we live out the way we treat others
- 13. So we *love mercy* while *doing justly*.
 - a. we act with a justice that is *wrapped in kindness*
 - b. maybe the best way to explain this is to give an illustration
 - c. if I’m a mechanic and I align wheels for a living, *doing justly simply means* that I will align the wheels on your vehicle according to the specs in the manual.
 - d. and I’ll do it *because* that’s what you’re paying for and that’s what the technical manual requires.
 - e. but *if I love mercy*, when your car is being raised in the air, I’m not just looking at how to align your wheels – I’m looking for how I can make your vehicle as safe as possible.
 - f. why? Because that car belongs to you – a person created in the image of God for His glory and I love what God loves and He loves YOU!
 - g. I may never see your face – it doesn’t matter – because God

sees me and watches my work and I want it to be worship to Him.

- h. So I align your wheels, not just to the specs, but to maximize tire wear and increase your control of the car.
14. FRIEND - Do you love mercy?
- a. do you delight in demonstrating loving-kindness to others?
 - b. or do you look at people with suspicion?
 - c. do you expect people to hurt you and cheat you and lie to you?
 - d. or do you go in to situations free of all that because you trust that God will protect you and so you can be free to love and serve them?

And to walk humbly with your God?

15. Can two walk together and not be agreed?
16. You know, if we are really walking with God, is there ANY ROOM WHATSOEVER for pride or arrogance?
17. No! The man or woman who professes to be tight with God but who's arrogant and boastful is a liar.
18. There is no one in Scripture who has more encounters with God than Moses, and you know what the scripture says about he, he was the meekest man on the face of the Earth
19. Well of course – that's what we would expect, for we can really only know ourselves as we see ourselves in relation to God.
- 20 Moses knew who and what he was *because* he knew God.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Putting It Together

1. In Hosea 6:6 God says . . .

I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

2. Friends, God doesn't want our religion – He wants us!
- a. He doesn't want Sunday mornings 3 times a month – He wants us 24/7
 - b. He's not interested in the 5 spot you drop in the offering;
 - c. He wants your checkbook, your house, car, investment portfolio, all of it, the whole package
3. God is not some petty deity who's worried about His reputation in

the media and how he's depicted in prime time TV

4. Throwing Him an occasional bone does not buy Him off or secure His favor.
5. He is the Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe and He called you into existence so that you could enjoy the wonder of His infinite love for all eternity.
6. A genuine relationship with Him will result in a life marked by merciful justice and humility.

B. Heart Issues

1. Justice, Mercy, and Humility are issues of the heart!
2. So let me end this morning by asking: What holds your heart today?
3. Where is your treasure? As Jesus said, where your heart is, there is your treasure also.
4. It's out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, the hands work, the feet travel, the eyes turn, and the money goes.