

I. Intro

A. Text: **Mic. 6:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> *“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?”* <sup>7</sup> *Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”* <sup>8</sup> *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:6-8 - ESV)*

B. American Challenges

1. Economic Concerns
2. Sex Exploitation
3. Racial Tension
4. Political Unrest
5. Abortion

C. Key Questions

1. What should we do in the face of apparent political, economic and social injustice?
  - a. That question has yet to be answered in my own mind.
2. What is God’s stance in the face of apparent political, economic and social injustice?
  - a. Seems to be a major theme of the Bible from the very beginning.
  - b. Certainly the major theme of the return of Jesus.

D. Textual Background

1. Micah prophesied some 700 years before the time of Christ.
  - a. Contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea
2. Prophesied that the Lord (Messiah) is coming out of His place of rest at the right hand of the Father... to do justice.
  - a. With vengeance on His mind. (**Mic. 1:2-7**)

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<sup>2</sup> Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. <sup>3</sup> For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. <sup>4</sup> And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. <sup>5</sup> All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? <sup>6</sup> Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. <sup>7</sup> All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, for from the fee of a prostitute she gathered them, and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return. (Mic. 1:2-7 - ESV)

b. With mercy on His mind. (Mic. 7: 18-20)

<sup>18</sup> Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. <sup>19</sup> He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. (Mic. 7:18 - ESV)

i. Micah's very name says it all: "Who is like Yahweh"?

## II. The Case

### A. What Does the Lord Require?

1. The Lord requires perfection; and empty religious rituals will never suffice.

<sup>6</sup> "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Mic. 6:6-7)

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- a. Simply doing good stuff (here or there) will never make you right with God.
  - b. Those who come out of the Protestant Reformation agree wholeheartedly with Micah's premise in **vv. 6-7**.
    - i. **Eph. 2:8-9**: *For we have been saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.*
    - ii. **Justified by faith**: The great exchange wherein the perfect works of Jesus are applied to those who accept it by faith.

B. What does God Expect From Us: Justice?

<sup>8</sup>*He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8 - ESV)*

- 1. God created man in His own image and likeness
  - a. God invested man with great value, worth and dignity.
  - b. God commanded man to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth.
  - c. Soon man began to redefine goodness as a selfish accomplishment (at the expense of others).
    - i. Man began to elevate his own worth (while denigrating the dignity, value and worth of others).
  - d. Brother against brother, family against family, city against city, etc.
    - i. Entire systems were created to benefit some at the expense of others.
- 2. God called Abraham out to establish (through him) a people whom He would use to bless the entire world.
  - a. Abraham simply believed God and was credited with righteousness.
  - b. Abraham enjoyed the privilege of righteousness (by faith alone), but was also given the responsibility of doing justice.

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<sup>19</sup> For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” (Gen. 18:19)

i. Righteousness vs. Justice

Righteousness (tsedaqah): an ethical standard that is flawless and establishes right relationship between parties.

Justice (mishpat): A legal judgment or verdict that is **retributive** (paying someone back for their wrong) or **restorative** (making the wrong things right). Seeking out the vulnerable to restore them.

- c. Abraham’s family was chosen and blessed to be a blessing.
- 3. Just a few generations after Abraham died, His family went into Egypt and became slaves.
  - a. They were impoverished, oppressed, racially targeted immigrants trying to survive a cruel land that capitalized off their vulnerability.
  - b. In an act of grace, YHWH delivered them with a mighty hand (through the Red Sea).
  - c. God gave them the instruction to forever remember the grace they received and extend that same mishpat to others who were in vulnerable.
    - i. **Ex. 22:21-27: Immigrants, widows, orphans, poor.**

<sup>21</sup> “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup> You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. <sup>23</sup> If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, <sup>24</sup> and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. <sup>25</sup> “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. <sup>26</sup> If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, <sup>27</sup> for that is his only covering, and it is

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*his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. (Ex. 22:21-27)*

ii. **Lev. 19:33-34**

<sup>33</sup> *“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. <sup>34</sup> You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 19:33-34)*

iii. **Deut. 10:17-19**

<sup>17</sup> *For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. <sup>18</sup> He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. <sup>19</sup> Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (Deut. 10:17-19)*

- d. Abraham’s family (Israel) became a nation who often perverted justice (mishpat) when they had the upper hand.

C. God’s response to the human legacy of injustice was to send His Son, Jesus, to do what no man could never do (in his own strength).

1. Jesus was completely righteous and did righteousness. He was perfect and enjoyed perfect communion with the Father.
  - a. Although Jesus never committed a crime, He was crucified like a common criminal (which was an atrocity).
  - b. Jesus didn’t just come to deliver the guilty, the vulnerable, the outcast... He came to literally experience the pain of the guilty, vulnerable and the outcast.
2. The Son of God came to the earth **AS** the rejected and despised.
  - a. Experienced the **immigrant** life of a family living as political refugees and foreigners in the land of Egypt as a young child.

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- b. Experienced the **poverty** of a working-class family from Nazareth.
    - i. Can anything good come out of Nazareth?
  - c. Experienced the **racial** hostility of a Jewish man living in a land that was occupied and controlled by the oppressive Roman Empire.
  - d. Experienced what it feels like to be victimized by a corrupt **criminal justice** system.

*\*If we look past the clutter and use American terminology, we'd probably say that Jesus was **lynched**.*

- 3. Jesus' method for responding to the injustices on the earth was to feel the pain of the vulnerable and oppressed.
  - a. He literally walked with people who were wronged.
    - i. He mourned where they mourned.
    - ii. He felt the pain they felt.
  - b. It took time and patience to feel their pain and walk with them through their adversity.
- 4. Jesus then did the unthinkable: He brought about restorative justice (mishpat) to those who would accept it.
  - a. He restored mankind to the dignity, honor and worth that we were created for.
  - b. He restored us to a place of righteousness and blamelessness (tsedaqah).
    - i. Right relationship with the Father
  - c. He took on our identity of shame, humiliation and guilt and restored us with His identity of value, dignity and honor.
    - i. **2 Cor. 5:21**: *And He who knew no sin, became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

D. The righteousness that Jesus gave those who would accept the free gift of His life was not just a status. It was a commissioning!

- 1. It was a staggering miracle that changed their standing before the Father AND the way they lived their lives forever.

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- a. They were not only righteous, but they're lives showed fruit of that righteousness.
  - b. 120 of Jesus' followers waited in an upper room for the gift of the Holy Spirit to accompany them, and they couldn't contain it any longer.
  - c. These disciples were so grateful for this righteousness (that they didn't earn or deserve), that their only reasonable response was to go and seek righteousness and justice for others.
    - i. Healing the sick, feeding the poor, caring for widows, taking orphans in, etc.

III. Conclusion: What Does the Lord require of us in the face of obvious injustices, oppression and inherent disadvantages?

*<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)*

A. Do justice

- 1. We have been commissioned to do justice because we've received restorative justice.
  - a. We've received righteousness by faith, so the Lord is looking for works of righteousness.
  - b. One of the evidences that we've been justified is that we do justice.
    - i. Wherever you find radical justification by grace, you will find those who seek justice for others (by grace).

B. Love Kindness (Mercy)

- 1. The kindness (mercy) that you've received by grace, seek others out to show them a similar kindness.
  - a. Restore their dignity, value and honor in like manner.
  - b. Seek out their righteousness before the Father.

C. Walk Humbly with your God.

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1. This humble walk with God involves a right relationship with our Father.
    - a. The overflow of that relationship pours into seeking righteousness and justice for our neighbors.
  2. We walk humbly with our God as we go about doing justice (healing the sick, assisting the poor, taking in orphans, etc).