

4 Epiphany  
Micah 6:1-8  
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On Tuesday nights we're looking in part at a book by Michael Curry, our Presiding Bishop. It's wonderfully titled *Crazy Christians: A Call to Follow Jesus*. It's a wonderful book. We're getting meaningful inspiration from Bishop Curry and his guidance in this book. Early in the book Bishop Curry writes this: "What the Church needs, what this world needs are some Christians who are as crazy as the Lord. Crazy enough to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God – like Jesus. Crazy enough to dare to change the world from the nightmare it often is to something closer to the dream that God dreams for it."

What Bishop Curry is getting at in this statement is what he thinks is the essence of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. And he draws a lot of inspiration in this statement from Micah 6:8, the last verse in today's Old Testament lesson. On Micah 6:8 a biblical scholar named Judy Fentress-Williams writes that, "...this verse is one of the best-known passages of scripture." A scholar named Philip J. King writes that, "...the verse is a perfect summary of the prophetic teaching on true religion." A scholar named W. Eugene March writes, "This verse is often quoted as a summation of the prophetic ethical tradition." A scholar named Stephen Winward writes that, "...this verse is the great oracle, the Mount Everest of the Old Testament, the Magna Carta of the prophetic religion." The Magna Carta, the great charter of the prophetic religion. All of this praise for this one verse from the Book of Micah, "He has told you, O mortal, 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?"

Micah is typically grouped with three other prophets, and they're called the Eighth-Century prophets because they all wrote in the 700's BC. Micah is typically grouped in with Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. In Amos 5:24, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream." This verse has had a huge impact on this country on the Civil Rights movement over the years. "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream." And Hosea writes, "I desire [says the [LORD] steadfast love and not sacrifice, (Hosea 6:6)." And the Hebrew here for "steadfast love" can also be translated as "kindness." And then in Isaiah 30:15 we read, "For thus said the LORD God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in

trust shall be your strength." "In quietness and trust" can be interpreted as "humility". So in the one verse in Micah 6:8, Micah picks up the three main points from Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Justice from Amos. Kindness, steadfast love from Hosea, and humility from Isaiah. "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

Going back to Philip J. King, he writes further about this passage, that it is, "...a perfect summary of prophetic teaching on true religion." A perfect, concise, memorable summary. What do the prophets teach? What is their message? Justice, kindness, mercy, humility. We walk with God in humility, with a servant's heart. "He has told you, O mortal 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?"

In preparing for this sermon I pulled off, among other books, my Old Testament textbook from my freshman year in college, a first edition of John Tullock's *The Old Testament Story*. The last time I checked it is now in its fourth edition. In reviewing Tullock's section on Micah I found a passage I had underlined when I was 19, in the Spring of 1982 when I took Introduction to the Old Testament. Dr. Tullock says this about this passage, "If only one sermon from Micah had survived, Micah 6:1-8 would be sufficient to cause him to rank among the great prophets of Israel."

These words from Micah still leap off of the page, "Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God." This one passage really says everything we need to know about the foundation of a life of faith. 2,700 years ago, using language from the heart of the Jewish prophetic tradition, Micah proclaimed what we can translate into our everyday language. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. Amen.