

11/20/22 Thanksgiving

The thanks giving expressed today comes from David's record for us in Psalm 37:28. It is our reason for thanksgiving and a reminder to be faithful to the Lord God: **For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones.** *Wrongdoers will be completely destroyed; the offspring of the wicked will perish.*

For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. That is a reason for every possible expression of thankfulness and encouragement for living a life of faithfulness. Another reason comes just 300 years after David wrote that passage in Psalm when Micah, a minor prophet was concerned for the nation of Israel and their descent toward utter chaos during the approximate 700 years since Moses lead them out of captivity from Egypt into the Promised Land. Micah could see that they had little to be thankful for as a result of their own failures. It is in that setting that he pleads with the Hebrew nation to pay attention to he and the other prophets with this moving statement from Micah 6:8 *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.*

And that is exactly what we are trying to do - to be a model of our thanks giving, *To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.*

We will come back to that passage in a few minutes but first as another expression of giving thanks this week I have asked each of our elected leaders to take a few minutes and express their thoughts regarding this congregation for the coming year. Their leadership vision becomes our mandate *To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.* This morning we will hear from Ray Ashcroft, Klark Kindler and Leonard Caldwell. ... **Thank you**

The intent of hearing from them is first to gain understanding and then to be on the same team with the same focus for where we are going and what we are doing as a congregation. Another reason to hear from them is to inspire persons identified with Meeker Christian Church to be active with the SPIRITUAL gifts with which GOD has empowered them. Here is an example of why I feel so strongly about this issue: Picture a little 12 horsepower garden tractor hooked to a large tandem side delivery rake in a 40 acre field of freshly mown hay. Then picture an 80 horsepower tractor hooked to the same rake. Which would accomplish the assigned task with greatest effectiveness. The larger tractor obviously. The same holds true for our church. The larger the horsepower (or the more people) working toward the same goal, the more effective the results will be.

Therefore we build on the foundation of our leaders ideas for a presentation from the Old Testament minor prophet book Micah which shows us the necessary prerequisite for effective use of Spiritual gifts.

Background: When Micah began his ministry about 735 BC, both Israel (known as the Northern Kingdom then) and Judah, the (Southern Kingdom) were enjoying times of unaccustomed peace and prosperity. But the situation also had it ominous side. The rich began to imitate the life-styles of surrounding pagan nations and through graft, corruption, and bribery condemned the mass of the populace into overcrowded areas along with the squalor and disease that accompanied poverty. It is absolutely repulsive to read of the so called religious rites of their ruling Canaanite worship rituals which some of the Israelite people were accepting as normal. It was into this cesspool of degradation that the country farmer prophet Micah was cast by GOD to let HIS people know what was in store for them if they did not repent. Micah's message was simple and to the point. Either the nation repent and act like GOD'S chosen nation or be punished.

The message Micah gave to Israel over 2500 years ago is the same message needing proclaimed today in order that you will understand completely your relationship to the HEAVENLY FATHER and will thereby use your Spiritual gifts for HIS divine glory.

Examine Micah 6:8 *HE HAS SHOWED YOU, O MAN, 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.*

By your very presence in this assembly you have demonstrated that you understand there is a need in your life – and you suspect that GOD is the answer, that HE will show you what is good. We are here today to affirm that conclusion prompted by the Holy Spirit in your being. We are here today to hearten and challenge everyone present that GOD has shown us clearly what is good and what the LORD requires of us. **First** God requires us to become a believer, a Christian, and a faithful member of Meeker Christian Church. **Secondly**, He requires us to turn that belief into action. The word belief like the word worship has the connotation of action attached to it. This sermon is designed to encourage everyone to become an active part in the functioning body of the church. I realize many of you already are extremely active and we praise the name of JESUS for that. We look to your experience for leadership, training and direction in developing the Spiritual gifts of others as described in Galatians 6.

Here is a summary of that lifestyle from Micah 6:8 which GOD expects of HIS faithful followers:

I. **TO ACT JUSTLY**

With an eye to the age and circumstances in which Micah prophesied we might more fully understand the intent of the word Justly - The word justice implicated here apparently had a two -pronged application:

A. The first prong of justice is fairness toward fellow man. As individuals became more wealthy they demanded more and more to satisfy their cravings and ascending lifestyle. That resulted in degrading the value of human life and the society moral and ethical system was based on the greed, power and ruthlessness of the aristocracy.

B. The second prong of justice is fairness toward GOD. Part of the pressure of a rapidly ascending economic lifestyle was a deviation from GODLY religious practices. The Israelites to whom Micah prophesied were blatantly comprising the teachings of GODLINESS by diluting and interspersing the perversions of the false god baal and other heathen gods whose worship was base, immoral, vulgar, violent and profoundly demeaning to it's participants.

Application today: Perhaps it is a trite statement that we should learn from history and to fail to do so is to be destined to repeat the mistakes and destroy one's own heritage. But to learn from Israels experience as recorded for us by Micah is to recognize that to act justly means to rise above the norms of culture and society, it means to fearlessly live by the principles taught by JESUS CHRIST.

Christian family be aware of the world in which you live. If you are wandering from GOD, return to the protection of HIS way. Our society is a battleground and your only armor is the eternal love offered by GOD - your hope in GOD and eternal life is the only hope with a promise. Go for it.

The second GODLY lifestyle in preparation for utilizing spiritual gifts is:

II. TO LOVE MERCY

Even as one understands justice between men and tries to apply it's principles to their lifestyle, the fact remains that it is not justice that we want for ourselves as much as it is mercy. Justice says that we are to get what we have coming according to the law of the ultimate authority. That means true justice would be

based solely on GOD'S laws, the source of truth! But even then it is not justice for which we cry, but mercy. Mercy is our deepest need because all have violated the law and justice would demand that we be punished accordingly. Mercy means leniency when one deserves punishment. So Micah told those sad Israelites to act Justly but to love mercy. That is powerful! Because to love anything means to place it above one's own selfish desires and wants. That is also the message to us today. Love mercy. Mercy is a superior attitude, and apparently develops from practicing justice. Paul said it like this in Galatians 5:22-23 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."* Being merciful is practicing and living by the Golden Rule - Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. James 2:8 *If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.*

Our final GODLY lifestyle in preparation for using our Spiritual gifts is:

III. TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD

Perhaps the best way for me to portray this attitude of walking humbly with GOD is when one is able to honestly and confidently appraise their own place in GOD'S earthly kingdom. Then to serve with adoration, knowing that you are in contact with the very mind of GOD and are thereby controlled by HIS divine plan for the ages, and you find yourself growing closer and closer to HIS will for your life.

As mercy is a superior attitude to justice, so walking humbly with your GOD must be a result of practicing mercy.

Summary: When one has learned that loving mercy and walking humbly with GOD is when they are confident in their eternal relationship with HIM. It means that they work and serve not for the glory or recognition of self, but to work and serve for the praise of the GOD of creation, the God of Justice, Mercy and love.

When you have that inner confidence and self-control directed by GOD then you are abundantly ready to use your spiritual gifts.

The invitation hymn is a time for accepting Christ as Savior and for remembering to pray for family or friends who have not made that decision. The Bible teaches that becoming a Christian means believing in Christ, repenting of our sins, confessing our belief, and being baptized (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:10). If you are ready today to make that step of faith then during the hymn step into the nearest aisle and come down to the front. I will ask you to accept HIM as LORD of your life. Then plans will be made for you to be baptized. GOD loves you so much, and so do those of us in this assembly. Consider the words of Jesus in Luke 12:8 - *I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before the angels of GOD.* Please come and acknowledge Jesus before this assembly as we stand together and sing ____.

Psalm 37:28.

Micah 6:8 (frequent reference)

Galatians 5:22-23

James 2:8

Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:10 (reference only)

Luke 12:8