Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Many pagan religions in Micah’s day had what we might consider strange rules. Some required you to sacrifice your firstborn child. In fact, it was not uncommon that children or human sacrifice took place to keep the god’s happy. When calamitous weather struck, pagan religions would say, “we need to do something for we have made the gods angry. We need to appease God’s wrath.” So they would sacrifice whatever living things were precious to them.

**Who Is A God Like You?**

**Micah 7:18-20**

Trinity III – 6/28/2020

You have probably seen this depicted in movies where the women or children of the community are offered as a sacrifice to keep some god happy. While it is a movie, those depictions are all the more frightening because they actually took place. It is why God warns the Israelites they are “not” to sacrifice their children as do the pagans.

We know there are no other gods, only the imaginings of the minds of people. Maybe something Satan has driven them to imagine them.

What is truly scary is how many people do not understand the truth about the only true God. Even worse are many versions of Christianity which do not understand the truth about God.

Ask people, “What is Christianity?” Most people, including most Christians, will say that Christianity is a set of rules of how you are to live before God. Don’t believe me? Consider when a well-known Christian, especially someone who has spoken out about some issue of Christian morality, whether politician a church leader, falls in sin and it becomes public, what do people say? “He doesn’t even practice what he preaches.” Or, “See, he doesn’t even believe what he speaks about.”

I have had numerous conversations with people who like to make the claim, “I’ve read the Bible, so I know what I am talking about.” These self-supposed biblical experts are some of the most completely clueless about the truth of God. They know all about God; the God of wrath, the God who demands perfection, the God who gave His Law to Moses, the morality which is espoused in that Law, but they do not know the Truth of God.

Yes, God has given His Law and requires us to keep it. Yes, God demands perfection of us. Yes, God speaks about hell and a place of eternal torment and punishment where He will send all those who are impenitent.

But is that the sum and totality of Christianity? Is that the truth of God?

Dear beloved of God, the threats of the Law, God’s wrath, and His eternal punishment, those things are God’s alien work. In other words, that is the work which God does that He’d rather not do. It is the work which He does so that His real work, the truth of God can be revealed.

Christianity is not about our earning a place before God. And while we are to love God and our neighbor, the good Christian life is not about what we do or do not do. What the good Christian life is, is contained in today’s Old Testament lesson. Listen again: 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. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

While many supposed Bible experts claim that the Old Testament is nothing but Law, here is some of the sweetest Gospel.

If Christianity is all about whether or not we keep God’s Law, if it is all about whether or not we earn heaven or hell, if it is all about living perfectly, then there are no good Christians. Jesus asked someone who called Him good teacher, “why do you call me good? There are none that are good.” Jesus, of course, was beyond good, He was perfect, He was without sin. I am not Jesus – neither are you.

As we know the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that fear begins with understanding our sinfulness. We have done things which we should not have done and failed to do the things we know we ought to have done. We do deserve nothing but God’s wrath and eternal punishment.

That is why Micah was moved by God to speak to us so boldly about the Truth of God. Jesus, God’s Christ is the living truth. He is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. In compassion for us, He is God who takes our sin into His own flesh and dies to tread our iniquities under foot.

There is no other religion, including the false versions of Christianity, which has God doing it all for us. All false religions, in including false versions of Christianity, have man doing their part to appease God’s wrath.

Remember last week when we learned that the fear of the Lord leads to repentance? Fear of the Lord instills in us a “stop” mechanism, “Whoa, I do not want to do that which God forbids, for I am afraid of His wrath.” It leads to repentance, “Lord have mercy upon me for my sinfulness, for your wrath is a terrible thing.”

Hopefully our confirmands, Kassidy, Aubrey, and Kendra (as well as Tanya and Charlie) remember how Luther’s explanations to each commandment began, “we should fear and love God.” Those explanations continued, “so that we do not…” We do not want to do those things out of fear of the Lord.

But each explanation also continues with a “but…” After every explanation of what we should not do, there is a ‘but’ statement containing a list of things we should be doing. Those things we should be doing out of love. That is the point of the second half of Luther’s explanation of each commandment. It is out of love that we keep the commandments.

A task done under threats or fear of penalties, is usually poorly done. At the very least, it is done with a disturbed heart.

It is in the understanding of who we are as the redeemed of God, showered by God’s love, that we in turn love Him and love our neighbor. We love because He first loved us. Micah expresses God’s love by saying, “Who is a God like you?” All the gods which rose from the mind of man are gods which demand and reward obedience.

The Only God is different, He loves to love us. There is no other god like Him – for no other gods exist, except in the mind and heart of man.

It is so very true, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us! Who is a God like that? None of the pagan gods would ever give their life for their followers. When things are going bad for the people, they are encouraged to try harder.

Most of Christianity today speaks about what we are to do for God. It is when we have done for God that God will then do for us, smile upon us, and bless us, “If God is not blessing you as you’d like, then pray harder, live better, do more evangelism, yadda, yadda, yadda, and then God will bless you.”

Do not believe the lies in the name of Christ! God blesses, because there is no other God like Him. He blesses, for that is His nature. He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

God reveals the way He works to Micah, and Micah records that for our ears. 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. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Dear friends, there is no other god like our God. There is no other religion like that which is ours – true Christianity. Even false Christianity does not get what Micah explains in our text.

God moves those whom He calls to be His children, to repentance. God pardons iniquity. God delights in steadfast love – His love for us. He has compassion on us. He stomps out our iniquities. He casts our sins into the sea. There is no other god like this.

Who is a God like ours who takes the sins of all into Himself and sheds His blood to forgive sin?

Who is a God like ours who sacrifices His only Son to redeem to Himself a holy people?

Who is a God like ours who adopts rebellious children into His family in a miracle of water and His own Word?

Who is a God like ours who commands forgiveness to be spoken over disobedience rather than wrath?

Who is a God like ours who offers life-giving food, His own body to eat and His precious blood to drink, to His people week, after week?

Who is a God like ours who blesses those who are disobedient to Him?

Who is a God like ours who works faith in us to trust in Him and not in ourselves?

Who is a God like yours, who makes you His own?

Who is a God like yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who loves you unto life everlasting?

This is a God worth confirming our faith in! Thankfully, His Spirit works that faith in us!

Yes, we are to love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul. But our love for Him flows from His love for us.

And if God has loved us in such a manner, how can we not love all others whom He has created in His image, and for whom He Himself died to forgive?

This love He also works in us!

Praise be His holy name forever and ever. Amen.