

## What Does God Require of Us? Micah 6

### Introduction

- Weekend in Columbus serving as Dean of our denominations leadership academy
  - At one point, I found myself sitting in the foyer of an unfamiliar church
    - Quiet, no one else around
    - The stillness in the room was quite inviting after a busy week at church
    - During that moment I took some time to collect my thoughts and find my center with God again
    - I felt this sense of God's presence as this peaceful moment unfolded.
    - Then something happened
      - I began to hear a consistent tapping noise
      - At first I couldn't quite locate where the tap was coming from or who or what might be causing it
      - It stopped for a moment and then the tapping noise began again
      - This time my ears began to track the sound to the corner of the room
      - As I investigated this corner, my eyes caught this large window that extended from the floor up several feet on the wall.
      - Again the sound...this time I found what was creating this sound that had interrupted my moment of serenity with God; it was a cardinal!
      - I took a few moments to observe the cardinal. At this point, he had stepped back from the window and looked to be assessing his dilemma
      - The cardinal could look inside the window. Inside appeared to be a whole new world that was enticing to this cardinal.
      - It seemed simple. He could clearly see what he wanted. I didn't appear as though there was anything in his way, except that each time he launched into his pursuit he would hit the clear pane of the window.
  - The life of a pastor
    - Constantly observing life
    - Looking for illustrations that might connect God's Word to the life of a congregation
    - This moment yesterday morning in quiet solace which then was interrupted by this cardinal was one such opportunity for an illustration
  - How many of us have had the desire to know God or do something for God; we can see a picture of what it might look like, but for whatever reason we keep beating our head into unforeseen obstacles that stop us from pursuing the very thing we want and need?
- **Micah 6:8**

- Life can feel very demanding at times. Trying to find refuge in God may seem overwhelming, especially when you feel like you don't meet God's standards.
- It's like that cardinal who can see something better on the inside, but keeps running into this invisible glass barrier.
- Many times in our pursuit for God we make it way to complicated than what it really needs to be.
- God simplifies what He requires of us in Micah 6:8; do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God.
- Offered this New Year vision to you last week: Keep It Simple
  - From self-reflection and from observing others I believe we have the tendency to make things way more complicated than they need to be. The more complicated things become, the more our stress levels rise and our motivation decreases.
  - What if we could make a commitment this year to keep things simple? Even if our lives are filled with complex issues or schedules, what if our focus for the year was simple?
  - If we could live by this simple truth offered to us in Micah 6:8, do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly before God, how might this truth define our life?

### Covenant Relationship

- **Micah 6:1**
  - Chapter 6 begins with the setting of a trial
    - God calls the Nation of Israel into the court of His presence
    - God has a question for the Nation; **Micah 6:3**
      - It appears as though the Nation of Israel is blaming God for their current oppression
      - It is their understanding that they are The People of God and therefore are deserving of certain privileges
      - This is the equivalent of The Nation of Israel seeing the vision of God, but constantly hitting into a glass wall, unable to obtain the vision before them.
      - If you have hit that wall, especially multiple times and can't get to where you feel you deserve to go it can be extremely frustrating
  - God offers a reminder of what He has done for them in the past; **Micah 6:4-5**
    - God reminds the people that he is a faithful God
    - The people's response, "Great! That's Awesome, but what about right now?"
    - Remember from last week, as we discussed vision
      - We often associate vision with what is in front of us
      - Sometimes vision for the future requires us to observe the past
      - In this case, The Nation of Israel needs to be reminded of something significant about their relationship with God.

- The key to Israel's relationship with God was the covenant that God had made with them.
  - The covenant stated in simple terms that the Nation of Israel was God's people. Therefore, God would provide for them in every situation. BUT, the clause to the terms of the covenant was that the Nation of Israel had to remain faithful to God.
  - So what God reminds the Nation of Israel in Micah 6 is that God has kept his end of the covenant. The problem is not God. God is not keeping the people from this grand vision.
  - Instead the problem lies with the Nation of Israel's responsibility to the covenant.
- God's Covenant is key not just to this chapter but to the entire story of the Bible
  - Noah-flood
  - Abraham- a nation
  - Moses-Promise Land
  - David- Everlasting Kingdom
  - Jesus- Salvation through the Cross
- The key to our relationship with God is very simple
  - Once we enter into covenant with God we are obligated to it.
  - The grace of the covenant is that God is obligated to us despite our failings.
  - If we desire to discover the true fulness of the covenant we have to keep our part.

### The Complicated Part

- Here's where we have the tendency to make things complicated
  - **Micah 6:6-7**
  - We begin offering God things that God doesn't need
    - Reflection of Pagan Worship
      - How to appease the gods
      - God for gardening, Sun, Moon, Stars
      - God for reproduction
      - God for almost every aspect of life
      - Before we do anything lets make sure we have appeased the gods and made them happy so that we will get what we want
    - This is the window pane that we often hit against: How can I appease God so that I can get what I want?
      - When we start bargaining with God we hit the window every time.
      - Bargaining with God is when we try to pick and choose what we will give God based on what is convenient for us.
        - I'll play fair as long as others play fair

- I'll love others as long as they do or act the way that I do, or as long as they meet my expectations
  - I'll seek God's wisdom when I've exhausted all my other options, or on Sunday morning.
- When we keep hitting the glass wall, we begin to ask God, "What else do you want from me?!"
- **Micah 6:11-12**
  - The disconnect between doing and being
    - This is who you are supposed to be as people in covenant with God, but in reality this is who you really are
    - When we enter into a relationship with God he transforms who we are, which then impacts what we do.
    - When we lose sight of this point, we hit the wall and we make life way more complicated than what God intended.
  - Podcast-Two leaders discussing the importance of self-awareness
    - The disconnect between our expectations or values and how we actually live
      - Parents wrestle with this disconnect all the time
        - Expectations for our kids that are not always reflected in our lives
        - "Do as I say, not as I do"
      - Christians observed by the world
        - Intent of living by a higher standard set by God, and yet our doing doesn't match who we are supposed to be.
        - Last week, Jesus called these people hypocrites!
    - This awareness is key to centering our lives with Christ
      - It's why moments like yesterday, sitting in the church, seeking direction from God, centering life on what is most important is key
      - It opens us up to who we are called to be and set the course for what we do.

### What does God require of us?

- **Micah 6:8**
  - The truth is doing justice, extending mercy, and living faithfully requires more from us than anything else we could offer to God.
  - We will never appreciate God's best until we offer our best.
  - God has already offered his best through Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
  - There's no question that God is faithful, merciful, and just. It's because of what God has done for us that we should respond with Gratitude and Faithfulness by offering all that we have.
  - In doing so, we will receive all that God has.
- Making Christ the Center: Life, Relationships, Service

- **Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”**
- A simple focus for our life connects who God has called us to be, with the way we live our life.
- In very simple terms, God requires all that we are.
  - We may not be perfect
  - We may have doubts
  - We may not have everything figured out
  - Those aren’t the things that God requires of us
- Instead, God requires all of who we are so that he can transform our lives.
- This is our only hope to reach what is on the other side of the window
  - Blessing
  - Purpose
  - Strength
  - Contentment
  - You name it, its on the other side when we give all of who we are to God.

### Conclusion

- Found out that the cardinal is well known by the church
  - My experience was not isolated or unique
  - The cardinal has gained a reputation
  - Still trying to get in, through to the other side
- Does that describe you?
  - Do you keep trying, but keep running into the wall
  - God’s requirements are simple
    - Simple doesn’t necessarily mean easy
    - Surrender is never easy
    - But surrender is liberating
    - New life can begin, with a renewed focused
    - Keep it Simple!