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Reverend Dr. Brigitte A. Black

It's Hammer Time

Micah 6:1-8

People are fascinated with court cases. There is an abundance of judge, lawyer and criminal law shows on television. There has been much debate on whether cameras and production crews should be allowed in court rooms. They even revived the OJ Simpson court case last year some twenty years after the trial. God files a lawsuit against His covenant people – Israel. God charged the people with bad attitudes and actions towards God and their neighbor. He challenged the people to stand up before the mountains and plead their case. God called on all creation to be witnesses for Him. God opening arguments began with reminding the people of His goodness towards them. God told them how He had been their protector, defender, and provider.

Therefore, Micah the prophet tried to answer God by acknowledging the people were wrong and asked what sacrifices could they bring to worship God, to atone for their transgressions and sins? God had set up an elaborate sacrificial system for their sins. This system was an outward expression of inner trust and dependence on God for his mercy and grace. What is mercy and grace? Mercy is God holding back what we deserved. When we do not get what we deserve that is mercy. Grace is when we do not deserve a blessing but we receive one anyhow. Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve. Grace is God opening a door when we do not deserve a door being opened. We did not earn it and we did not deserve it. God's Riches at Christ Expense. God did not want sacrifices but obedience. God did not want payment but for the people, for us, to change our actions and attitude towards one another and God.

Moreover, what does the Lord require of us? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. To act justly is to be fair in our dealings with one another. Biblical justice is the sorting out what rightfully belongs to whom and returning it to them. Everyone needs access to the goods and services that it takes to survive. The work of liberation, redemption, and salvation is the work of giving things back to their rightful owners. To love mercy is to have a loyal love towards one another, to desire to do no harm to our neighbors and to meet the needs of others. To love knowing we are human and can be wounded, we will suffer pain, and yet we are dependent upon our relationships. To love mercy is love tenderly with empathy and compassion. To walk humbly with our God is to be in right relationship and fellowship with our God. To radically trust God is to walk humbly with God. Walking humbly is participating in the bringing forth of God's reign here on earth. We have much work to do, let us be about it.

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Scripture Reference

God Challenges Israel

6 Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

²Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.

³“O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

⁴For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

⁵O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”

What God Requires

⁶“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?

⁷Will 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?”

⁸He 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?

Prayer

O Lord, our Lord how excellent is Your name in all the earth. We declare Your glory to everyone. You are mighty in battle, majestic, and Your awesomeness can be experienced throughout all of creation. Your wisdom and knowledge deliver us from darkness and into the marvelous light. O God, we confess that we have sinned and fallen short in our dealings with each other. We have sinned in word, thought, and deed. We confess we have harbored ill will towards our neighbor, those who do not think like us, or even look like us. We have been silent when we should have spoken up and out against injustice and unfair treatment of others. Lord, teach us to be more loving, kind, and compassionate towards each other. Help us to be more mindful of the needs of each other. Let the words of our mouth glorify You, empower the downtrodden, edify each other and encourage one another to greatness. We are on the battlefield and yet we sometimes get weary. Show us Your power and strength. Open our eyes that we may see Your plan, purpose, and promise. Lord be the light unto our path and order our steps. You are our healer, our protector, our provider, and our deliverer. This we pray in the power of the name of Jesus, our savior.

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Stewardship Moment

“⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” [2 Corinthians 9:6 NIV]

Our giving impacts the world and the church through missions, evangelism and church growth. Good stewardship will help to develop new ministries, to meet the needs of those less fortunate, and to increase our presence in the community. For example, when we give generously it helps the Board of Christian Education to plan a wonderful Vacation Bible School that reaches the unchurched in our community. Generous giving, allows the evangelism team to reach out to the surrounding community. Giving that is consistent and generous allows for good planning and budgeting. Continue to give generously so that we will reach beyond the four walls of Wayman AMEC and be a blessing. Remember we are stewards and not the owners of what we have. Our giving is rooted in our understanding of stewardship and how we respond to God’s love in our lives. The more you give the more God gives to you!