

**Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted in this background**

- Please record sermon at both worship services

**Key Questions**

1. What is this sermon about?
  - a. This sermon is about what God requires of God's people - not religious stuff, instead walking daily with God.
2. Why is this sermon important?
  - a. This sermon is important because, at times, it can be easy to focus on religious stuff and leave God out of our every day life.
3. What are the next action steps?
  - a. Do justice - Actively working for fairness and equality for all
  - b. Embrace love - love of God and love of neighbor, especially those that are in the most need
  - c. Walk with God - in a humble and simple way that restores joy and leads to life.
4. What is the good news (bottom line)?
  - a. The good news is that God's grace for us in Jesus Christ make it possible to do justice, embrace love and walk humbly with God.

**Context**

This is the second sermon in the series, Restoring Joy: 5 Habits for Living Well. In this series we explore five important lessons the Bible teaches us about living well and experiencing real joy.

This sermon has been prepared with the help of Finding Joy in Real Life: 5 Habits for Living Well sermon series at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection which was April 14 to May 19, 2013. More information about this series can be found online at <http://j.mp/1mRQf4f>.

**Metadata**

- Topic(s)
  - Discipleship
- Books of the Bible
  - Micah
- Series
  - Restoring Joy: 5 Habits for Living Well
- Tags
  - love, justice, humility, walk, daily, discipleship,

Third Sunday of Easter  
Restoring Joy: The Requirements of the Lord  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text online at <http://j.mp/QFK4IW>

May 4, 2014  
Micah 6:6-8  
Target Word Count: 2,325  
Video online at [Insert Link Here]

## Micah 6:6-8, CEB

6 With what should I approach the Lord and bow down before God on high? Should I come before him with entirely burned offerings, with year-old calves? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with many torrents of oil? Should I give my oldest child for my crime; the fruit of my body for the sin of my spirit? 8 He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.

## Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

## Sermon Starter Video

- [Play sermon starter video.](#)
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## Introduction

### Series Introduction

This week we continue our series, “Restoring Joy: 5 Habits for Living Well” in which we are taking a look at some of the most important lessons that help us connect with God and restore joy in our life? These five topics summarize much of the rest of the Bible and address the key concepts of our faith.

Because these are so central to our faith, it is likely that there will be nothing that we address in this series with which you are not already familiar. At times, we might tend to even dismiss these themes because of their simplicity and familiarity. Yet I want to challenge you to pay attention to what they actually mean and how we practice them today. For when we practice these things, we experience what the Psalmist describes in Psalm 1:3. It is like being “... like a tree replanted by streams of water, which bears fruit at just the right time and whose leaves don’t fade. Whatever they do succeeds.”<sup>1</sup>

When we focus on doing God’s will, we find joy, meaning and life.

### Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 1:3, CEB.

message today.

- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

### **Opening Prayer**

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

### **Opening Story**

Open with a story about meeting requirements or expectations.

### **Transition**

The scripture for today focuses on the requirements or expectations which God has for us.

### **Introduction to the Prophets**

As we begin the sermon today, I want to remind you about prophets in the Bible. The prophets were not primarily concerned with telling the future. They spoke about the future to help the people of that day hear God's message for today. The prophets would point out the places where the people were not living the way that God wanted them to live and would paint a picture of two outcomes in the future. One outcome if the people decided to turn from their sin and seek to follow God and another outcome if the people continued to ignore God and follow their own path. The prophets helped clarify the results of the people's obedience, on one hand, and disobedience on the other.

### **Transition**

This did not require psychic powers. The prophets were familiar with God and God's story and they were aware of the context in which they lived.

### **Israel in the Ancient Near East**

#### **Geography**

You remember that Israel was a little sliver of a country with the desert to the east and Mediterranean to the west. The country of Israel today is 8,522 square miles, which is about one-tenth the size of the state of Kansas and a little less than 6 times larger than Butler County.

It is not very big, but it was strategically located.

## **Trade**

All of the major trade routes in that time ran through Israel. If trade was moving from Asia to Africa, it passed through Israel. If Egypt was exporting goods they would pass through Israel. Israel was surrounded by larger empires, each one of which would have wanted to control this land.

## **God's Grace and Protection**

What the prophets knew was that any of the surrounding empires were strong enough to take that land. The only thing that prevented that from happening were the grace and power of God. If the people turned away from God and God withheld protection then terrible things would happen. It turns out that this is exactly what happened.

## **Assyrian Empire Invades the Northern Kingdom of Israel**

In 722, the Assyrian empire invaded the northern kingdom of Israel and the northern tribes are lost. Micah was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah and Most of Micah's word is to the kingdom of Judah in the south. What happened to your neighbors in the north is going to happen to you, if you don't turn away from your sin and seek to follow God.

## **Complacent Approach to Religion**

You see, the people in Micah's time were taking a complacent approach to religion. They were trying to figure out, what is the easiest way for me to receive God's blessings. An approach to faith which focuses on making me happy, instead of doing God's will. These are two very different approaches to religion.

- Some people ask, What is God going to do for me? or What do I need to do for God to bless me?
- Instead, what God is asking us, is "How are you going to live out my commands in the world to other people?"

## **Transition**

These two different approaches to faith still remain for us today. So let's take a closer look at what the prophet tells us God does require.

## **Covenant Lawsuit**

### **Introduction**

Chapter 6 is written as if it were in a court of law, a lawsuit between God and God's people with the mountains and hills as jury. "God begins by reciting a short summary of the great

acts that God performed on behalf of the people (6:3-5).”<sup>2</sup>

### Question of the People

Then, in verse 6, “an individual raises the question for the whole community. What can we do to please God, especially at those times when we have gone astray and need to make things right with God again?”<sup>3</sup> Hear these words again from Micah 6:6-7:

“With what should I approach the Lord and bow down before God on high? Should I come before him with entirely burned offerings, with year-old calves? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with many torrents of oil? Should I give my oldest child for my crime; the fruit of my body for the sin of my spirit?”

“The questions are all related to participation in Israel’s sacrificial cult. What constitutes an acceptable offering: year-old calves, rams, “rivers of oil,” even the worshiper’s firstborn? The questions about quantity gradually rise to ridiculous levels (“thousands of rams” or “ten thousand rivers of oil”) ... [or] even the giving of a human life? ... The questions push the point to the extreme: Does anything suffice to move God to accept me, particularly when I have defied God, repented, and wish to return to a closer relationship?”<sup>4</sup>

### God’s Response

“The answer changes the question. This often happens in the biblical story. ... The people’s questions were preoccupied with what they could do to please God through religious ritual and ceremony. Micah is in good company with other prophets when he clearly states that God is more interested in the way people live their everyday lives than in their religious practices.”<sup>5</sup>

### Transition

God’s response summarizes three important concepts in the Bible that we can use today to help restore joy in our life.

## What God Requires

### Do justice (Hebrew: Mispat)

- Do justice
  - Hebrew: Mispat

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<sup>2</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Micah* vol. VII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 577.

<sup>3</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Micah* vol. VII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 579-80.

<sup>4</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Micah* vol. VII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 579-80.

<sup>5</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Micah* vol. VII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 580.

The first is to do justice.

The Hebrew word is *Mispat* and it is not seeing that people receive a fair hearing. “*Mispat* is something that people do. It is not enough to wish for justice or to complain because it is lacking. This is a dynamic concept that calls on God’s people to work for fairness and equality for all, particularly the weak and the powerless who are exploited by others.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Embrace faithful love (Hebrew: *hesed*)**

- Do justice
- Embrace faithful love
  - Hebrew: *hesed*

The second is to embrace faithful love.

The Hebrew word *hesed* “is very common in the Bible, but its meaning can hardly be conveyed by any single English word.”<sup>7</sup> It “may be translated with a wide range of English words, including love, loyalty, mercy, kindness, “steadfast love,” and loving-kindness, according to the nuance of the biblical passage and the interpretive understanding of the translator. It can be used to describe the key element in relationships - either between humans or between God and humanity.

When used to describe the relationship between two people it is usually a “relationship where one person is in significant need of help from the other, help that typically may go beyond the usual expectations of such a relationship, and help that often is essential to the basic well-being or even the survival of the needy person.”<sup>8</sup>

When used to describe the relationship between God and humanity, it is a reminder of how we are invited to respond to God’s love. This type of love to God is one that is not motivated out of duty or fear, instead it is loving God without resentment, manipulation or coercion. God does not force us to love in return, but instead invites us to respond with *hesed*.

### **Walk humbly with your God**

- Do justice
- Embrace faithful love
- Walk humbly with your God

The final of these three requirements are to walk humbly with God. “The key word in this verse is “walk”. We are to walk with God, careful to put God first and to live in conformity with God’s will. Our life pilgrimage is likened to a walk with God as our constant companion.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Micah* vol. VII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 580.

<sup>7</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Micah* vol. VII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 580.

<sup>8</sup> Katharine Doob Sakenfeld “*Khesed*.” In Volume 3, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine D. Sakenfeld, et al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Leander E. Keck, ed., *Micah* vol. VII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 580.

## **Transition**

These verses reject the idea that there are things that we can do to make things right between us and God or to force God to bless us.

## **Conclusion**

### **Good News**

The good news is that God's grace for us in Jesus Christ make it possible to do justice, embrace love and walk humbly with God. God came to be one of us in Jesus birth. Jesus showed us what it is like to live as part of God's kingdom during his life on earth. Through Jesus' death and resurrection he conquered evil and made it possible for us to live as part of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

### **Call to Action**

My invitation for you this week is to

- Do justice - Actively working for fairness and equality for all
- Embrace love - love of God and love of neighbor, especially those that are in the most need
- Walk with God - in a humble and simple way that restores joy and leads to life.

### **Invitation**

Will you pray with me?