

# Week Five: Do Justice

**Sunday, April 29, 2018**

by: Rev. Roger Lenander

*Micah 6:8 (NRSV)*

*<sup>8</sup>He 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?*

**Do Justice:** *To be accurate or fair by representing someone or something as that person or thing truly is.*

God is clear we are to view others in the world as God sees them. When I preside at a wedding, I tell the couple to look at one another. I remind them that each one is a sacred creation of God. And in their relationship they are to handle the other as sacred. Carefully, respectfully, protectively. They are stewards of God's creation.

**“Do Justice”** connects us with the 10 Commandments where believers are commanded to live without harming one another physically, slander with words, or covet in greed. They are also to protect the same from happening to others. To “do justice” is to be a person always in action in pursuit of God's justice for all. It is to fight for the other as the sacred of God's creation.

This requirement from God is not to create a relationship with God, it is a reflection of God's relationship with us. As God has forgiven our sins, we are called to forgive others. As God saves us from times of trial, we are called to rescue of others in their time of trial.

We **Do Justice** in community. Together we find new ideas and perspectives, share better ways to engage in justice work, remember our motivation, and grow our faith.

*God, open our eyes that we may see others in the world through your vision. Give us hearts and minds equipped in the pursuit and witness to your justice in the world. Give to us the power of your Spirit to pursue the sacred fruits of the life that is ours in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Monday, April 30, 2018**

by: Misty Coyle

<sup>8</sup>But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do,  
what GOD is looking for in men and women.

It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor,  
be compassionate and loyal in your love,  
And don't take yourself too seriously—  
take God seriously.

Micah 6:8 (MSG)

In the book of Micah, we see Israel had allowed their hearts to wander from God AGAIN, and their connection to God was merely ceremony and tradition. They offered sacrifices but left their hearts at home. It seemed the people were prepared to offer God anything but their love and devotion. That was the easiest way to please God. Why make the church or your own worship messy with your sins?

The Israelites just didn't get it. God is about relationship and wanted THEM, not their stuff. But the Israelites have lived so long in Egypt and a religion which required them to make the gods of harvest, water, etc. happy so that their rulers would not punish them. If you worshiped wrong, you were punished and cursed. You would lose your rights with the rulers.

Having rights and seeing justice served is a hot topic today and always have been through the time of history. The word justice is used to describe the use of a decision in a matter of something wrong to make right. For this to mean anything, we say people have 'rights' as human beings and as members of a community; therefore, rights dictate the flow of justice, right? In our dualistic view of the world – us versus them – we live in fear of being without money, love, hope, justice, and freedom. We gain rights by controlling the rights of others; thus, we have governments and committees. Here is the thing though: even though we read God as a vengeful god in the Old Testament, God does not take away anyone's rights or justice; he wants everyone free to live within their rights:

the right to experience love and belonging.

the right to forgive and be forgiven.

the right as sons and daughters, carriers of the Divine Spirit, to receive and give grace.

the right to have faith in ourselves, others and God.

the right to love our enemy and neighbor alike.

the right to love ourselves and enjoy our lives...

And more.

The search for justice was dependent on whether or not people could be accepted by God. God made it very clear in the Old Testament and more so with his son, Jesus Christ: acceptance never fell on the performance, behavior, or birth of anyone. The Israelites, and sometimes us today, thought they could please God by doing all the right things. He wouldn't notice their lack of devotion if they (or we) met the practical requirements of sacrifice of things from our homes or our time. The whole idea around sacrifice itself was redemption through love... even though we sin and even though our actions find us guilty, through the ultimate sacrifice he declares us innocent and redeemed. This is God's justice...

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*Romans 5:8*

***God's spirit is always here, our level of awareness heightens and dissipates according to our willingness to listen and see. It's in justice, mercy and humility where we see God most clearly.***

Lizzy Milani

Every single person has the right to experience God's grace and love. This is not our choice or something for us to dispute. It will always be our just cause to show everyone their right to experience God's grace and love.

***Heavenly Father, thank you for the ultimate sacrifice. Help me to show everyone through my actions and words, they are loved and have received the gift of grace. Let my body be used for you and my voice speak the words of your desire. Amen!***

**Tuesday, May 1, 2018**

by: Juel Pierce

*As [Jesus] taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."*

*He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." Mark 12:38-44*

What does it mean to "Do Justice"? Reading the Old Testament prophets, one reads that the people who need God's favor (and so our attention) the most are the widows, the orphans, the homeless, those who are immigrants—in other words, those who are outsiders in the culture, who do not have the resources to take care of themselves. The passage from Mark 12 calls attention to how unjust the scribes (religious authorities) were. They devoured widows' houses by preaching that sacrificial offerings were signs of one's love for God and of God's favor. I think it's fine with Jesus that the rich people put in large sums. But what is wrong with the picture that a poor widow puts in the offering all she had to live on? I think Jesus points to her not as a role model but as a victim of the injustice of the religious authorities.

I hope and believe that we as a congregation do not call on people who cannot afford to give to put in "all that you have." We seek to share the good news of Jesus that life in his name means having enough to eat and to live on as well as having hope and faith.

Doing justice in our culture often means making sure that our neighbors (all of them!) have enough to eat, a place to live, safety. It means seeing that no one has their living taken away from them because they appear to the rest of us to be not working hard enough. I think it also means taking into account how their history may have handicapped them. Caring for the widows and orphans, strangers and sojourners among our neighbors is God's call to all of us.

*God of justice, give us the will and the intention to answer your call to do justice. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 2, 2018**

by: Jim Pierce

*One of the scribes came near . . . and asked [Jesus], 'Which commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, 'Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' **The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12: 28—30, NRSV, emphasis added)*

*God 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?** (Micah 6: 8, NRSV, emphasis added)*

When I think of justice, I think of courtrooms where prosecution and defense argue a case to demonstrate whether or not a law was broken and punishment is deserved. Prosecution's job is to stick it to

the defendant. Defense's job is to find a way out. Whether someone was actually harmed by the actions of the one on trial is beside the point. When Micah calls us to do justice, he has something else in mind. The Hebrew word *mishpat*, translated *justice*, is about fairness and equality, not prosecution and defense.

When I think of justice, I think of demanding someone else to do what is right. "YOU, do your job. YOU, don't let them get away with it!" That has its place. This world is filled with people who have to be called to accountability. Again, Micah has something else in mind. He counsels us to focus first on ourselves before calling out others.

I learned to drive and got my first car back when bumpers were sturdy, sticking out things. Shortly after I got that car I was cruising our small town main street and at a stop sign ever so gently bumped, with my Pontiac's front bumper, the also sticking out rear tail light of the car in front of me. That was car driven by one of my high school classmates. We got out and looked for damage. My car had none. His had a small piece broken out of that tail light lens.

"You broke my tail light," he said. "No," I said, "It was already broken. I noticed as I pulled up behind you." "You broke it." "No." "You broke it." "No." Finally he sighed, got in his car and drove off. We never spoke of it again, but all these years later I still remember and wonder. Why did I act that way? Was it shame? Was it fear of going home and telling dad? Was it simply that I thought I could get away with it. Was it all of these?

Now, replay that exchange, starting with this sentence, "I broke your tail light. I'll pay to get it fixed." That is doing justice.

Loving your neighbor as yourself by doing justice means our starting point is always ourselves. What am I thinking, saying, doing that harms others in any way, that denies them fairness and equality? What do I need to do to fix that, to make it right, to not keep doing it?

God went beyond fairness for me on the cross. God goes beyond fairness for me daily, many times each day, by providing what I need, forgiving me, restoring me. In doing this, God doesn't treat me better than others. God does justice by treating me the same way God treats others. Micah teaches us that we give thanks to God, we show our love for God and neighbor by doing the same. Do justice today.

*Gracious God, help my doing justice to not be bound by the letter of the law but by your example of justice that treats me not better, not worse than anyone else, but equally in need of your mercy and grace. Amen.*

**Thursday, May 3, 2018**

**by: Phil Hornbostel**

Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement and beautiful in appearance. As she was veiled, the scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled, so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. Those who were with her and all who saw her were weeping. Then the two elders stood up before the people and laid their hands on her head. Through her tears she looked up toward Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. The elders said "While we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids. Then a young man, who was hiding there, came to her. We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. Although we saw them embracing, we could not hold the man, because he was stronger than

we, and he opened the doors and got away. We did, however, seize this woman and asked who the young man was, but she would not tell us. These things we testify.” Because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death.

Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice and said, “O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; you know that these men have given false evidence against me. And now I am to die, though I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me!” The Lord heard her cry. Just as she was being led off to execution, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel, and he shouted with a loud voice, “I want no part in shedding this woman’s blood!”---Susanna vv 31-44.

Do justice? That’s what the prophet Micah says we are called as Christians to do. How do we do justice? Most of us are not law enforcement people, we are not attorneys, we almost make efforts to avoid the courthouse and the “halls of justice” in our community. We tend to obey the “big” laws, except perhaps speed limits, and most of us have never faced prosecution or imprisonment. So, what would God have us do?

Well, let’s turn this inside out, as Daniel is called to do (and I’m not going to give you the spoiler; I’ll let you read ‘the rest of the story’, of Daniel employing the standard approach to false testimony to save Susanna). Let’s say, for the sake of understanding, that the most obvious way for Christians to do justice, is simply to *speak out against injustice*. We have been given a wonderful innate gift with our birth, which has been further cultivated by our baptism as God’s children: the sense of right and wrong. Call it conscience, call it (as in our text) the “holy spirit”, call it “justice”, but we all have it. For those who doubt it, divide the last piece of pumpkin pie or the last piece of birthday cake for two children, and while you are doing this, watch their reactions. If you still doubt it, deliberately divide it unequally and watch what happens. *That* is the sense of justice!

Christians are called to use this God-given sense, just like Daniel, to speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves: the minority, the disenfranchised, those who do not speak English, or cannot speak at all, the refugee, the alien among us, the very young, the very old. All these are our neighbors. All these are children of God. All these are created by God as equals. And as such, all are entitled to justice. And when we witness injustice, we speak up. Just as when we were three years old, we shout, “*No fair! That’s cheating! You can’t do that! I’m telling!*”. We stand up, and when we do this, then we are indeed “doing justice”, and as Micah has so wisely told us, it is then that we are doing the will of God.

*Father, I thank you for the gift of justice that You have placed into my heart. I ask that You give me the strength of character in the face of injustice, to speak up for those who are facing injustice, and to press undeterred for justice to prevail. This I ask for the sake of Jesus, Your Son, my Lord, Amen*

**Friday, May 4, 2018**

by: Jeff Langdon

**Micah 6:8 “God has shown you , O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? You are to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”**

These verses serve as a pretty good job description of our life as one of God's own... a summary of

what God desires from us. These verses follow a basic question that God is asking in verse 3... “My people, look at all I have done for you. Have I burdened you? Answer me.” The writer then describes what God has done for God's people.

What then follows is a request to know then what God wants of us...how can we please God. What does God want in return?

Does God want us to make sacrificial offerings? (6:6-7). No. God wants our actions.

The writer states that if we do not live the way we should, it is not out of ignorance. God has revealed how God wants us to live.

We are tempted to think we have done well when we pray, read our bibles, go to worship, and avoid overtly sinful activity. These things are good, and they please God, but if this is all we do we are little better than the Pharisees who knew the scriptures, worshiped at the synagogue, and never committed “big sins” (or at least they did not get caught).

To please God, the writer of Micah says we are to first do justice. We are not just to talk about it. We are not just to ponder about it. We are to actually do justice. We are to be absolutely fair in all our dealings with others... with our immediate family and with all with whom we have any kind of dealings. We are act with justice. We are to be a person who treats others the way we would want to be treated. We are not to cheat people in business. We are to fight oppression. We are to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Pretty simple... we are to act. And we don't get any extra credit for it.

But, remember as followers of Christ, it is not we who act, but it is the Holy Spirit who acts thru us. We are the vessel, but you have to choose to be a receptive vessel. We have the opportunity to do justice in the places where Jesus leads us in our daily lives. And to do justice if often means we have to step out of our doors with eyes wide open. Injustice is all around us, and most of us are pretty skilled at turning a blind eye.

So, open your eyes and look around you for where Jesus would lead you to do justice. How do you want to be treated? How can you be involved? How can you speak up? How can you intervene? How can you increase your serve? How can you reflect the love of Christ to those you encounter?

*Lord fill us with your grace and remind that it there is nothing we can do to earn it. As we respond to your grace, help us to live in a way that is pleasing to you. Open our eyes to the injustice around us and lead us to respond to the world with justice. Help us to be a reflection of your love in all we do. Amen*

**Saturday, May 5, 2018**

by: Rev. Roger Lenander

*Psalm 37:27-29 (NRSV)*

*Depart from evil, and do good;  
so you shall abide forever.*

*For the Lord loves justice;  
he will not forsake his faithful ones.*

When I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade we moved 3 times. That meant I attended 3 different schools that year. Fortunately my parents and each teacher helped in making each transition as smooth as possible. Of course, the only issue for a 10 year old is making new friends. My recollection is that my parents paid

attention with whom I established playmate relationships. They would step in only if a particular relationship was going to lead to trouble. (Come to think of it, they never appeared to consider that I might be the troublemaker!) What is interesting is that, as the years went by, my parents would welcome troubled youth into our home. They would listen and encourage them to a more constructive way of living. That taught me that, while I am to be aware of the influences of evil thoughts and actions, it did not mean cutting one's self off from the power to influence others to do good.

I am blessed to be live in God's community of people who fight the battle of good and evil in and around us. Together we know the power of the Word to teach us to live in the good. We also know the brokenness of evil in and around us. In Christ, we are filled with the goodness of the love of God for the world. God's justice does not overlook the evil that seeks to draw us away from God. God's justice is not only to steer lives towards the goodness of God, it is to promise the believer that God will never abandon the faithful. As we are sent into the world to "do justice" it is with the understanding that God will continue to do battle with the evil that seeks to draw our heart and mind away from God's purpose to love one another in our life.

*Almighty God, we give thanks that you promise that nothing will be able to separate us from the love in Jesus Christ. Let your goodness flow from our lives like an everflowing stream. Amen.*