

6/16/24 Christ Fellowship

The Vision of Man for Man – Micah 6:8

I'm going to ask you a question but don't holler out just yet. I want you to think about it because it could be taken several ways. The question is, what do you want? Now, as I say that, the first thing that pops into your head may be your desire for more sleep. Or you are thirsty or you want tacos or some other temporary, fleeting desire. But I want you to think deeper. What is it that you deep down really desire? What is the long-term want of your life?

Maybe you would say it's happiness or contentment. Maybe it's security or health or peace or joy. Those are all good things. So, how do you get them? Does money bring those things? Will a new president in the White House bring those things? Some of you may think you need to get married to have those things. Some of you may think you need to get divorced.

But deep down, we all know that all those things – happiness, peace, joy, contentment, etc. – are gifts from God. We know it from the scriptures. Most of Paul's letters began with the words "*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" We also know it from experience, don't we? Money and stuff and power and sex drugs rock and roll don't bring peace or joy. So, we know that all that – peace, joy, contentment, security, health and all the other basic desires of our life – are gifts from God.

So, the second question is, how do we get those gifts? What do we have to do to get God to fork over the peace? What do we have to do? What do we have to give or give up? What do we have to promise or sacrifice to get God to unhand the joy and the contentment? That's a question that has been asked by thinking man for thousands of years. And for thousands of years, our frame of reference for the answer to that question has been how we get things from other people.

As a child, if you want your mother to give you an ice cream cone, you know there are certain things you have to do and certain things you know you can't do. As an adult, if you want your boss to give you a raise, again, you know there are things you have to do and things you can't do. And so we transfer that knowledge of how to manipulate people into how to get God to give us what we want. And it doesn't work out very well. You can fool your mama sometimes and you can fool your boss sometimes but God looks at the heart.

At some point, we start to realize that when we do good things out of the desire of our hearts that God blesses us with what we want. And the good news is that not only does He

give all that peace and joy and contentment stuff but He actually changes what we want. **Psalm 37:4** says, *“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* He doesn’t just give you peace but He actually gives you the desire to do good.

This is the second message in our series on the vision that God has given us. **Proverbs 29:18** says that where there is no vision, the people perish. We want to know God’s vision for us. We want to know what He wants and what His will is for our lives, our church, our country, our finances and our marriages. And God wants us to know what His will is and what His vision is and so He has revealed it in scripture. And when we believe that vision and embrace that vision and we are obedient to it, God gets the glory and we get the blessings, those blessings of peace, joy and contentment.

In **Micah chapter 6**, God says through Micah what His vision is for man as a whole – all of mankind generally but specifically for all true believers. So, this is God’s vision **of man for man**. Micah is toward the back of the Old Testament. It is another minor prophet because it is not a very long book. It is right next to **Jonah** that we studied last week and also next to **Nahum**. Feel free to look in the contents page of your Bible to find it. No shame in that. It’s small and hard to find. But in **chapter 6**, God starts this passage talking as if He were a human trying to figure out what God wants. And I want you to notice that the things God proposes that will please Him go from typical to the extreme.

We are going to focus on **verse 8** but let’s keep it in context by starting in **verse 6**. **Micah 6:6-8** says, *“With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7 Will He Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Guys, how many of you have a wife that is hard to buy for? You know what I mean. If you buy her clothes and they are too big, you obviously think she’s fat. If they are too small, you obviously think she’s fat. I don’t know how that works but it does in her brain. Or if you buy her something practical, it’s not personal and if you buy her something personal, it’s not practical. So, you try to just give her money and now she knows you don’t even care about her. It’s frustrating.

God doesn’t want you to be frustrated about knowing what He wants. He makes it plain here in this passage. This is God’s vision for man (and women, of course). If you want to

have God's gifts of peace and joy and contentment, you do what is pleasing to God. Now, some of you may be thinking at this point that it sounds like I'm saying you should be obedient to what God wants just so you can get gifts from Him. And honestly, that may be how it starts out for you. And that's okay. You do what you are supposed to do and God will give you His gifts of peace and joy and contentment and it won't take long before He has given you the desires of your heart and you start to WANT to please Him just because of who He is. It's kind of the opposite of a vicious cycle. It's a wonderful cycle. Obedience brings benefits, benefits bring obedience and so on.

So, let's look at what God says He wants. What does God expect of you, oh man? What is His vision for you? **First, act justly.** That original word is used to describe an honorable judge sitting in a court room and it specifically describes him setting wrong things right. We are to set the wrong things right to please God. And I'm going to go ahead and combine the second point in this scripture – **to love mercy** - in with this one because they both have to do with how we minister to and walk and act before other people. The third point – **to walk humbly** - has to do with how we are before God and we can separate that from these two.

My goal for this series is to see what God's vision is for each aspect of our lives but specifically in the context of God's vision for us as a church. And we know that God's vision for our church includes us ministering to the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated. So, to act justly and set the wrong things right is applicable to us as individuals and to us as a church. And it is applicable to us to love mercy when it comes to who we are called to minister to.

But we first have to figure out what exactly is wrong so we can set it right and then we will love showing them mercy. And you say, "*Well, Todd, that's easy. What's wrong is they are poor, addicted and incarcerated.*" But that's not the root of the problem. And I'm glad that's not the root of the problem because, like I've said before, there's not a lot we can do in and of ourselves to get them out of those lifestyles. They need Jesus for that and that's where we can help them and how God has called us to help.

So, if we are going to act justly and love mercy and do what we can to set the wrong things right for the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated, it starts with loving them. Who did Jesus minister to specifically when He was on earth? The poor, the downcast, the afflicted and diseased. He didn't spend a lot of time ministering to the wealthy and powerful. And how did He minister to those poor and afflicted? He showed them love.

If we are going to walk justly and set the wrong things right for those we have been called to then we have to love like Jesus did. And the thing is, y'all are really good at that already. I have seen you, over and over again, loving on the unlovely by giving your time, talents and treasures to prove that love. I have seen you give money, give rides, pray with them, listen to them, write to them, visit them in jail, and even babysit their kids. So, I don't need to spend a lot time encouraging you in that area.

My encouragement is, in fact, to be careful. We have to be careful in the way we walk justly and the way we set things right and the way that we love mercy because – I'll be honest – so many of the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated are takers, not givers. Not all of them by any means but I believe it is a higher percentage than the other population. It's part of the reason that many of them are in the position they are in. God blesses givers. He protects and provides for those that give and love and love showing mercy. And when that is not your lifestyle, there are consequences. So, for those of you that are givers, you have to be careful.

In the **Book of Luke**, Jesus is seen healing people left and right. He has called His disciples and He is teaching them and teaching the people. He drives out an evil spirit in **chapter 4**, heals more people, does a miracle in front of the disciples in **chapter 5**, cleanses a man with leprosy and finally at the end of **chapter 5** it says that the news about Jesus spread all the more and crowds of people were coming to be healed of their sicknesses. And do you know what it says that Jesus did? **Verse 16** says, *“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”*

Jesus was careful. He knew that this world is full of takers. Did Jesus walk justly? Did He set right what was wrong? Of course He did. Did Jesus love mercy? Of course He did. But He also knew that if He tried to help everybody, He would be no good to anybody. Jesus was all God but He was also all man and He knew His physical limitations as a man. We need to know ours as well. And we get that knowledge only from the Holy Spirit so we have to be living in the Spirit as we act justly and love mercy.

There's also a line we can cross that goes from helping people to enabling them. Years ago, there was a couple that found out we have a food pantry and they just thought it was the greatest thing ever. They didn't have a car so about once a month, they would just call me and place their order and expect me to bring it to them. I did it for a while but then I realized they were starting to take advantage of it. So, one day I just suggested that I would come and get them and let them do some work around the church to earn some groceries.

And I didn't have it out of my mouth good and the man just exploded and called me all kinds of names and hung up on me and I've never heard from them since.

But I can honestly say that those people are about the only ones that I know of that have taken advantage of our food pantry. That's a rare thing. Most people are just so grateful and willing to work for it or whatever they need to do. Oftentimes they come back later and donate some things. I just say that to say that we have to be careful as we act justly and love mercy because some people don't ever give. They only take.

Let's move on to the last part of this verse. **Walk humbly with your God.** Okay, here's the scenario. You have done your best to walk justly. You are a mercy-loving fool and you are living in the Spirit who gives you wisdom and discernment and God is using you and blessing you and blessing your efforts. And through you and others like you, the church is growing and being blessed. And it's a great time filled with peace and joy and contentment just like God has promised. And even people outside of the church are going, *"Wow! Look at how God is blessing the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated through Christ Fellowship!"* People continue to say, *"Christ Fellowship? Oh, I know y'all. That's the church that helps people!"*

Well, I don't know about you but to me that's like hitting a homerun in the ninth inning of the Super Bowl. That's the goal. That's what we want. But the question is, how do you react to that? Is your reaction to look at that with wonder and gratitude that God would even be mindful of some little country church in a little country town? Or do you have a little bit of, *"Hmm, look at what we did."?*

When you think of the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament, what do you think of? Do you think of the greatest and most prolific prophet to ever speak? Do you think of the prophecies about Jesus and where He will be born and how He will live and how He will die? Isaiah was to prophecy what Muhammed Ali was to boxing and Michael Jordan was to basketball. He was the G.O.A.T., right? The greatest of all time.

If anybody could look back on their career and say, *"Hmm, look what I did"* it was Isaiah. But when Isaiah got a vision of God Himself, do you remember his response? **In Isaiah chapter 6**, he says he saw the Lord on His throne high and lifted up and there were fiery angels flying all around and the whole place was shaking and smoking and do you remember Isaiah's words?

He said, “*Sup God? Hey man did you see what I did the other day? That was pretty good, right?*” No! He thought he was going to die and probably wanted to die at the vision he had. He said, “**Woe is me! I’m ruined!**”

See, we need to have the same kind of vision that Isaiah had. No, not a literal vision of God Himself. We don’t need that. I mean a vision or perspective of who God is and who we are; the kind of vision that led Isaiah to say in **chapter 64 verse 6** that all our deeds are as filthy rags. And then he said in **verse 8** that God is the potter and we are the clay. We are just the work of your hand, oh God.

It's hard not to walk humbly with God when you understand and embrace that He is the Creator and Sustainer of this world. He is the Savior. He is the Provider and Protector. It is only through Him and by His power and grace that we are able to do anything. As **Acts 17** says, “*For in him we live and move and have our being.*”

In the world that we live in, justice is becoming a rare commodity. Mercy is just about unheard of. And trying to be humble is what the world considers weakness. But that’s what makes people who live that way stand out. And if you stand out you will have two things happen. You will be attacked. And you will make God look good. So, just be prepared for the attack. It will be hard because Satan and this world don’t play fair. But making God look good is so worth it.

When you can do what God says He expects of us – to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly – God gives those gifts of peace and joy and contentment to you in the midst of the attack and then He gives more gifts of blessings and grace and mercy and forgiveness more than you could ever ask or imagine. That’s His plan. That’s His vision for you, oh man. And He wants you to know His vision and live that vision in His power and by His grace. Thank you, Lord!

Do you know Him? Sure, you know OF Him but do you have a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus? The Father said from the beginning of time that where there is sin, something had to die. So, Jesus, who is God, came to earth to die on the cross to pay the price the Father said was due for your sins. And all you have to do is believe. That belief will change your life. It will change how you act, what you say, where you go, how you spend your money. A true relationship will make a major change in your life. Have you had that change? If not, I need to talk with you right now. We aren’t guaranteed another breath. Do it right now as the music plays.