

“Humility—A Mark of Discipleship”—Micah 6:6-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Humility—A Mark of Discipleship”, is Micah 6:6-8 → *“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? Will 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?” He has told you, O man, 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?* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

You answer the phone to hear the voice on the other end tell you that the police will appear at your door to arrest you for tax fraud, or some such indictment, if you do not respond to this message immediately with some kind of monetary transaction. It is interesting how one can immediately recognize it as a scam call and hang up, yet walk away with terrible feelings at the mention of being arrested or visited by law enforcement personnel. It is kind of like that feeling of seeing the flashing lights of a state trooper in your rear view mirror. You move over to the far right and get ready to “face the music” (whatever it might be)

and feel a sense of relief when it passes by you. However, in the meantime you may wonder if you've broken the law (if you're not aware of doing so) because you know you're imperfect nature only too well and were wondering how you were going to justify your actions.

The thought of being called to account for our actions can be both humbling and anger producing at the same time. It can bring you to think about what you've done wrong, even if you're not aware of having done something wrong, and produce feelings of being humiliated with a reaction of anger in self-righteousness justification. Or it could be a "sin reality check" which brings you to accept responsibility for your wrongdoing and be willing to accept the consequences which justice demands. So, which will it be? Does your answer make a difference if it is the LORD Who is bringing the indictment against you?

This was the situation in our text as Yahweh spoke to His people through the prophet Micah. He, along with the prophets Hosea and Isaiah, lived during a time in which Israel and Judah experienced great affluence. As happens so much of the time when people are living in such luxury, their hearts became proud and they indulged in idolatry, hypocrisy and licentiousness of every sort. Thus, these prophets had the difficult calling of proclaiming Yahweh's judgment upon their disobedience, making them most unpopular, especially with the leadership and nobility of God's people. In our text Micah says *the LORD*

has an indictment against His people, and He will contend with them. He calls them to plead their case before Him and give Him an answer for the charges He brings against their arrogant idolatry, hypocrisy and immorality (cf. Micah 6:1-3).

In Micah's day there was not much humility displayed as God's people dealt with each other in their daily life. Listen to how the behavior of the leadership, the ones responsible to make sure justice was served amongst the people, is described in Micah 3:2-3. They were men who *hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off My people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of My people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron*. What a description! Because of their lack of humility God called His people to given an account for their actions which had a terrible affect upon their relationship with Himself and the others around them.

In this "accounting" the LORD held up the *righteous acts* which He performed in the lives of His people throughout their history, which displayed His faithfulness, grace, forgiveness, love and power in their lives (cf. Micah 6:4-5). What could they hold up to him? As happens so often with sinners, the efforts of self-justification will hold up performances which one feels are worthy as "righteous acts" as well. In verse 6 of our text Micah seems to answer the indictment with the

question: *With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?* He expresses a humility before such an indictment.

Let's consider, shall we? He asks:

- *Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?*

Yahweh had established such sacrifices as expressions of humbling themselves in obedience to Him after redeeming them from Egyptian slavery. Certainly offering these should be counted as “righteous acts” of worship which they could hold up to Him.

- *Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? (verse 7)* Maybe huge amounts of product in the sacrifices would show why one should be considered righteous in God's sight. When King Solomon dedicated the temple, countless animals were sacrificed (cf. 1 Kings 8:5;63). Oil was poured on grain offerings (cf. Leviticus 2:1). Certainly the more oil one uses the more righteous he is, no?

- *Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (verse 7)* The heathen nations around Israel had the practice of offering their children to their gods as an ultimate display of devotion. Certainly such a sacrifice displays one's righteousness.

Such rhetorical questions are intended to reveal the hypocritical extent to which sinners will go to cling to their sins in arrogance with a

pretense of humility in the sight of others in worship. What outward motions of worship and sacrifice could actually be pleasing to God in the midst of such hypocrisy and sinful arrogance? True humility is a matter of the sinful heart in the presence of God, as King David confessed in Psalm 51:16-17 → *For You will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* To be contrite is to experience sorrow over your sins in an accountability to your Lord. Through it the Holy Spirit leads you to repentance, trusting in the steadfast love of God based upon **His** *righteous acts* in your life.

God has displayed His *righteous acts* in our lives in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ, thereby making us His disciples who humbly desire to follow Him in righteousness. Jesus, *Who . . . was in the form of God* willingly took *the form of a servant* and willingly humbled Himself *by becoming obedient to the point of death . . . on a cross* (cf. Philippians 2:6-8). He came to perform His earthly public ministry *not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many* (cf. Mark 10:45). He humbly served His Father's will as the perfect sacrifice which God's justice demanded for your sins **so that you can be completely forgiven of those sins**. He humbly served God's will by being perfectly obedient to Yahweh's law so that *His commandments are not burdensome* (cf. 1 John 5:3) and **now we delight in His law** (cf. Psalm 119:70,77,92,174).

It is in Jesus that the LORD *has told you . . . what is good*. So Micah asks in verse 8 of our text: *What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* The *righteous acts* of God worked for you in the Person & Work of Jesus flow through you by His Holy Spirit into the lives of others. As you *walk humbly with your God* it will be displayed in your dealings with others. It will change your whole perspective of *justice*. Instead of simply talking about justice you will **do justice**. “It means to harm no one, to render to each person what is his own, to bother no one; on the other hand, to help others, to promote their welfare, to prevent damage and violence, so that the wealthy may not surround and oppress the needy, and so that the guilty may be punished and the innocent protected.” (Luther, Martin, Luther’s Works, Vol. 18: Minor Prophets I: Hosea-Malachi, J.J. Pelikan, H.C. Oswald, & H.T. Lehmann, Editors. (p. 260). © 1999 Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, MO.) Thus, you will want to see *kindness*, which is listed in *the fruit of the Spirit* (cf. Galatians 5:22-23), to prevail in your dealings with others.

The characteristic of humility is described by Jesus as a **unique** characteristic of His disciples. Based upon giving *His life as a ransom* from the power of sin and the devil for you, humility is displayed in service to your neighbor. Instead of striking back, letting sin placed upon you breed sin in you by repaying evil with evil, humility will strive to *overcome evil with good* (cf. Romans 12:21). Instead of self-justification of

sin and hypocrisy, humility will accept responsibility for sin and confess it with *a broken and contrite heart*. Instead of spewing forth self-righteous judgments of others, walking *humbly with your God* strives to *let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up . . . that it may give grace to those who hear* (cf. Ephesians 4:29). Scripture is replete with practical ways in which the Holy Spirit will produce behaviors in keeping with walking *humbly with your God* in your daily discipleship.

The *righteous acts* of the LORD in the humility of Christ are the **beginning** of your proper relationship to Him as well as the **display** of that relationship properly in your dealings with others. You *walk humbly with . . . God* by **constant** repentance and faith through which the Holy Spirit produces a love for and obedience to Him. It is this forgiveness in Jesus Christ alone which moves you to display humility both in your relationship with the LORD and in your actions as you *walk . . . with* others each day. Amen.

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you
not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think,
but to think with sober judgment,
each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

(Romans 12:3)

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