

Church

Micah 6:6-8

Pastor Zeke Pipher

(GA) I have a question for all you parents – Do you ever find yourselves doing something today, that when you were a kid you promised yourself you’d never do when you had kids? I do something as a parent, that when I was a kid, I promised myself I’d never do.

A. When I was young and complained about what my mom had made for dinner, she’d go into this long speech about how kids around the world are starving and going without food... or shelter.

1. I told myself that when I had kids of my own, I’d never say that to them.

a. I say it all the time to our three kids.

B. I say it because it’s true. I get overwhelmed when I look at what’s happening around the world. The numbers are staggering.

1. For example, there are 2.2 billion children in the world – approximately 1 billion of those children live in poverty.

a. 640 million of the children in the world – about 1 in 3 – don’t have adequate shelter.

b. 400 million don’t have access to safe drinking water.

c. About 25,000 children die each day due to poverty.

2. Then there are the statistics about abuse and slavery. The International Justice Mission’s website says about the injustices occurring today around the world:

a. “More children, women and men are held in slavery right now than over the course of the entire trans-Atlantic slave trade: Millions toil in bondage, their work and even their bodies property of an owner.

Trafficking in humans generates profits in excess of 12 billion dollars a year for those who, by force and deception, sell human lives into slavery and sexual bondage. More than 2 million children are trapped in forced prostitution. The AIDS pandemic continues to rage, and the oppression of trafficking victims in the global sex trade contributes to the disease’s spread.

The land rights of women are violated on a massive scale worldwide, but with particular ferocity in Africa, leaving widows and other women in vulnerable positions unable to care for themselves or their children. Around the world, women suffer the double indignity of rape and seeing their perpetrators face no consequences for crimes of sexual violence.”¹

B. The total market value of illicit human trafficking is estimated to be in excess of \$32 billion (U.N. statistic).

¹ <http://www.ijm.org/ourwork/injusticetoday>. Date accessed?

2. 27 million men, women, and children are held as slaves today (Kevin Bales, *Disposable People*)²

C. If you struggle with a lack a desire for Jesus to come and set everything right on earth, spend 15 minutes on the internet researching the pain and suffering that is happening this week around the world.

1. It'll make you pray, "Jesus, come quickly."

(SN) What do we do while we're waiting on Him?

A. As the church – people who have found salvation and transformation in Jesus – what do we do while we're waiting for His return?

(S) Turn with me to the book of *Micah* in the O.T. Micah was a younger contemporary of Isaiah. They both wrote during the period when Assyria ruled Israel, around the 8th century B.C.

A. Both Micah and Isaiah dealt with the questions:

1. What does it look like to be God's people in a difficult time?

2. And, what does God want us to do about the injustice and suffering in the world?

a. Some of Micah's conclusions are in chapter 6 - *Read Micah 6:6-8*.

B. It's easy for God's people to fall into the trap of thinking that all He wants from us is to participate in a church service once a week.

1. It's important to preach the Word... it's important to meet together and sing worship songs... it's important to fellowship with each other... but are these activities *all* that God wants from us?

a. This is what Micah explores in *Verses 6-7 – Read*.

2. Micah is referring to activities that God has called the nation of Israel to do when they came together.

a. *Vs. 6* says: "Burnt offerings" and "calves a year old" – this is exactly what Aaron, Moses' brother – the first priest – offered to God in Leviticus 9:8, and the Lord accepted it.

i. God commands this sacrifice to subsequent generations of priests.

b. Same as in *verse 7*: offering "rams" and "oil" – these are both items that God commanded His people to sacrifice.

c. And in *verse 7*, the last part of the verse, there's a reference to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac – "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

i. This was one of the most pivotal moments in Israel's history – when Abraham displayed faith in God that was greater than his love for his son.

ii. This was a foreshadow of an act that God, Himself, would go through with His son.

3. These activities of sacrifice and worship described in *verses 6-7* please God – God commanded them of Israel. Just as He commands us today to meet together, preach the Word, sing praise to Him, give generously.

a. But Israel in this period was acting self-righteous... like these were the only things God wanted. And they felt they were doing them well... so they felt spiritual smug.

i. They were feeling like they were fulfilling everything God had for them – He saved us, we offer these sacrifices, and that's it.

a. But Micah's point is, **That's Not It!** These activities aren't the full picture of what pleases God... or what God wants from His people.

² Bales, Kevin. "Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy". University of California Press: LA and Berkely, CA, 1999. [Page?](#)

C. Verse 8 tells us that God expects more. *Read vs. 8* – there are three things God requires from us, *in addition* to our worship and church activities.

D. First of all, God expects us to **do justice**.

1. Think of how you feel when you've been treated unfairly.

a. About a year ago I was driving through Wahoo, NE, at about 4:00 in the morning. A police officer pulled behind me and turned on his lights and sirens. I wasn't speeding. I wasn't breaking any laws. I had my seatbelts on.

i. He came to my window and he said he pulled me over for three things:

a) Throwing a cigarette out the window.

b) Speeding

c) And swerving across the middle line.

b. I was so stunned – I didn't do any of those things – I even invited him into my truck to see if it smelled like smoke at all.

i. He kept repeating that he knows what he saw – and he eventually just wrote me a warning.

c. I felt so run over. It was completely unfair. It flared in me a sense of justice, so I came home and wrote a letter to the police chief in Wahoo. We've talked on the phone three times since then, and I feel like I've been heard.

2. When you're treated unfairly, it's a horrible feeling. Micah is saying here that God wants His people to feel this way about other people's injustice, too.

a. But like I wrote a letter on *my* behalf, God wants us to take action on the behalf of others.

i. If you haven't heard of the International Justice Mission – IJM – you should take some time this week and visit their website. IJM is just one organization, but they exist to find injustice in the world and then work to free people.

a) Sexual slavery... child trafficking... abuse of women and children... they find where it's happening and they send teams of Christian attorneys and officials in to rescue people.

b. Gary Haugen, the founder of IJM, wrote a book titled, *Good News About Injustice*. Not an easy read, I'll warn you. But if you sense that God wants you to get involved, it's a must!

i. Haugen exhorts the church to get involved. Listen to what he writes.

Read 67-68.³

3. God expects us to feel when people around the world are treated unfairly... and to take action... because of the HOPE we have in a Savior who has overcome the devil and will one day make the things on earth as they are in heaven.

E. He also expects us to love mercy, it says in *Micah 6:8*. This word is "hesed" – which is kindness, or love that seeks to prove itself through action.

1. Jesus loved us... and proved it through dying on the cross. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends." (*John 15:3*)

a. Micah is stressing a love for people that takes action to serve them... meet their needs... take care of them.

2. Again, it's overwhelming to look around the world and see all the pain and suffering. The enemy would like us to be overwhelmed to the point of inaction. To simply say we love all people... but then do nothing to help them.

³ Haugen, Gary. "Good News About Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World." Intersity Press: Downer's Grove, IL. 1999. 67-68.

- a. Let's not just do nothing. God does call us to do something.
- 3. You're not going to fix EVERYthing that wrong with EVERYone... but that's ok. I need reminded of this often... it's ok.
 - a. Back in 2001, President Bush said in his inagural speech that he wanted to "build a single nation of justice and opportunity." What a great, large-vision, for our President to lay out there for us.
 - i. Only, that kind of a vision backfires on me, it's almost too big, too overwhelming.
 - b. Jesus had a different strategy. He preached the good news. He healed the sick. He freed those oppressed by spiritual bondage. He fed people. He elevated the worth of women. He helped the world every day... one person at a time.
 - i. And Jesus had his bad days – days when most of the people listening walked away. Days when people in his own town turned against him and tried to kill Him.
 - ii. But He had his days that seem to go well – times when from a crowd of people, a few would stick around and say, "We want to follow you."
 - c. He kept waking up each day asking His Father, what is next. What one person do you have next on my radar... to feed... to clothe... to share the good news with as I give them fish and bread?
 - i. This is what God is commanding of us in *Micah 6:8*.
- F. The third thing that God expects from us is to "walk humbly" with Him.
 - 1. This command almost doesn't seem to fit. The first command is to do justice. We get that. The second is to put love into action, love mercy. Again, that makes sense.
 - a. How does walk humbly fit?
 - 2. Christians can go about the business of the first two requirements – get out there and do justice and love mercy – but full of themselves.
 - a. God's people are so easily led to feel prideful. We, who have been given the truth, often start acting like know-it-alls.
 - b. We who have been saved start to act as if this salvation was something we did for ourselves.
 - i. This always smells bad.
 - 3. It's a bit cliché, but we are beggars who have been given food, and then told to go out and share that food with others.
 - a. When we go and share that food as if we invented it, or materialized for ourselves out of thin air and the people we share it with are LUCKY to have us help them... people don't see Jesus. People don't experience the justice and the mercy of God.
 - i. They experience the pride of a person, someone using acts of justice, or mercy, or a knowledge of the truth, to glorify themselves.
 - 4. Micah's command to walk humbly keeps eternity in focus. Yes, God wants His people to do justice... yes, He wants us to do kindness... but He's not just concerned with the improvement of people's earthly status.
 - a. He wants people from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people group to come to know Him as their Savior. To gain eternity.
 - i. We take the Savior to them, when we walk humbly with our God.
 - b. Jesus humbled Himself, didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped, or clung, but became a person so that through His death we might be saved – when we walk in this same manner of humility... people see our Savior.

- i. We carry a humble Savior to people, by our humility. Our justice might free the sexual slave... our active kindness might provide a home for an orphan... but our humility might lead someone into the gates of eternity.

5. That's how "walking humbly with our God" fits.

(VR) God is so pleased when we come together like this and we worship Him. He blesses us... and we please Him.

A. But, brothers and sisters, Jesus expects – requires, it says in *Micah 6:8* – that we do more than just sing and fellowship and listen to sermons.

1. He expects that we will be His agents on this planet for justice and mercy and to introduce the humble Savior to those who need Him. Which is everybody, isn't it?

B. This places a call on each of our heads, as Christians. We need to find the ways God wants each of us to carry out justice and mercy and humility.

1. He may call some of you to law school... to join people like Gary Haugen in the fight against the atrocities of mankind against mankind. This would be great.

2. He may call some of us to simply find a family in poverty, or that is suffering, and think of creative ways to help.

a. One of the best ways we can be faithful to what God expects is by just getting to know a poor person or someone in need, and then quietly, discreetly, meet their needs. Perhaps anonymously.

i. Buying groceries... paying a utility bill... donating a car, or crib, or more sacrificial... 10 hours of your week.

3. For some of us, God may call you to adopt a child from someplace in the world, or be a part of the foster care system, or help out with a crisis pregnancy center, or a troubled teen program.

C. I'm not sure what it will look like for you and your family – but each of us have a call on our heads to be faithful to Jesus by taking action.

1. I went with a few other families from our church to a concert in Gretna last year. Bebo Norman, Charlie Peacock, and Andrew Peterson. Pretty awesome concert. At one point Bebo Norman talked about this subject – God's children taking action in the world, doing justice, mercy, and humility.

a. Bebo said that he had the chance to ask Gary Haugen about his work with International Justice Mission – Bebo asked Gary, "How do you do this work. Isn't it discouraging to see so much pain and injustice and not see God show up more than He does?"

i. Gary Haugen said to Bebo, "I used to weep and pray and ask God: 'God, where are you?'"

2. Gary said to Bebo, "I don't ask God anymore where He is. My theology has improved and deepened. Now, I ask God, 'God, where are your people?'"

a. I know I've asked that question before, "God, where are you?"

b. After studying *Micah 6*, my fear is that I'll face God someday, and He'll ask me: "Zeke, where were you? When men like Gary Haugen were out there injecting themselves for the sake of Christ into the horrific suffering and injustices in the world... where were you?"

i. Where were you spending your time?

ii. What were you spending your money on?

iii. What were you doing with your family more than taking family vacations and playing soccer and attending Wednesday nights at Heartland?

E. Friends, find what God wants from you in the area of global injustice and suffering... then be faithful in your calling.

1. “He has told you, O Heartland, 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?”