



Part 3: What do you see?

Micah 6:8

*We need to see as God sees, so we may act justly,
love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.*

"What do you see?"

As we reflect on Micah 6:8, I want us to lean into this question because the first line of verse 8 says, "He has shown you, oh man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?" So, do you see as God sees? Do you see so that you act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God? The honest reality is that throughout history, the Church has not always seen very clearly, and we have not always seen very clearly. We need to see more clearly.

Historical Context:

As Micah 1:1 says, Micah was a prophet from Moresheth during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This was during the time when Israel was split into the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah. It was a spiritual rollercoaster of kingdoms following after God's ways or the evil ways of the land.

For example, in reference to King Jotham, it says, "he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord." While following him, King Ahaz, "he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord," even to the extreme of the abhorrent cultic practice of child sacrifice. Ahaz sacrificed his own sons. Thankfully, following Ahaz, you had Hezekiah, who "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord." Micah is speaking into this rollercoaster of spiritual devotion where the land was often corrupt, and injustice was rampant.

Micah 2:1-2, "Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.
² They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud people of their homes, they rob them of their inheritance."

Micah 3:9-11, "Hear this, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; ¹⁰ who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. ¹¹ Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money."

Yet they look for the LORD's support and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us."

The Heart of Justice

We first see the heart of God in this passage with his passionate cry to them (Micah 6:3) "My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery."

Micah responds in verse 6 with ever-increasing rhetorical questions that are basically saying no sacrifice is enough to appease God. God does not want our works, but rather our hearts. This is similar to what Doug preached on last week out of Isaiah 58. The people were trying to "turn God's covenant of grace into a contract of God's blessing." God wants our hearts to be like His heart, a heart of justice.

The charge to "act justly" and "love mercy" are not two distinct things but rather intertwined. The word "mercy" comes from the Hebrew word "*hesed*" which means "unconditional grace and compassion." These phrases together really mean that unconditional grace and compassion are the attitude and motivation for the action of justice. So, we need the heart of justice to do the act of justice.

The phrase "walk humbly with your God" as Timothy Keller in his book, "Generous Justice," describes it is, "To walk humbly with God is to know him intimately and to be attentive to what he desires and loves." I love this radical language, in contrast to all other world religions where God is distant, and we are trying to appease Him, we walk with our God! We get to have a conversation with Him; we get to see what He sees; we get to go where He goes.

Jesus was the greatest example of the heart of justice for the poor and marginalized.

"Jesus, in his incarnation, "moved in" with the poor. He lived with, ate with, and associated with the socially ostracized (Matt 9:13). He raised the son of the poor widow (Luke 7:11-16) and showed the greatest respect to the immoral woman who was a social outcast (Luke 7:36). Indeed, Jesus spoke with women in public, something that a man with any standing in society would not have done, but Jesus resisted the sexism of this day (John 4:27). Jesus also refused to go along with the racism of his culture, making a hated Samaritan the hero of one of his most famous parables (Luke 10:26) and touching off a riot when he claimed that God loved Gentiles, like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, as much as Jews (Luke 4:25-27). Jesus showed special concern for children, despite his apostles' belief that they were not worth Jesus' time (Luke 18:15)." *"Generous Justice," Timothy Keller*

The Act of Justice

God is the creator and definer of that which is good. "He has shown you, oh man, what is good." This language refers back to Genesis 1, where seven times, after the end of every day of creation, it says, "And God saw that it was good." God is the creator and definer of the good, the true, and the beautiful. It is not based on our feelings, nor on sociological research; it is not based on some ideology, it is based on God.

The word "justice," "*misphat*" in Hebrew, means "punishment for wrongdoing and protection for everyone's rights." God's justice has three main components: equal treatment for all, special concern for those without power, and radical generosity. When we think of justice in the context of poverty, we sometimes with good intent naively just want to fix it by giving money to it. But poverty is incredibly complex. From a biblical perspective, the causes of poverty are oppression, calamity, and personal moral failure. We tend to focus on one of these areas and not see the whole picture.

For tangible examples of justice amid poverty, check out Timothy Keller's chapter "How Should we do Justice" in his book "Generous Justice."

What about me, who lives in the suburbs and does not see much injustice?

God calls us to concentric circles of missions. We first need to start where we are at. And that means we need to first start with our hearts. Have you given your life to Jesus so that you see as God sees? Have you confessed and repented of your blind spots so that you can see so much clearer? If you have never done these things, it is just a simple prayer, "Lord, I am sorry, I have messed up, and I need you. Forgive me for my sins and help me to see as you see."

After we start with our hearts, we respond to our family, neighbors, friends, co-workers, the city, the world. It is pretty easy to isolate ourselves from the injustices of our city and the world. Therefore, it is helpful to go places such as northeast Denver or Aurora to see the refugees, immigrants, and those in need, and enter into a relationship with others to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

What do you see?

Personally, in response to the current racial unrest and racial injustices within our country, I have watched several webinars and read several books. I believe that God is opening up more of my eyes to see.

A couple of statistics:

- In Colorado – Post-secondary credential attainment (certificate, associate degree, bachelor's degree, or professional degree) – Whites 65%, African American 44%, Hispanic 32%
- White wealth/assets are on average 10 x more than Black families
- 2019 – Average White household had \$139,000 in assets compared to \$12,780 for Black households.
- Black man makes 87 cents for every \$1 a white male makes
- Black woman makes 61 cents for every \$1 a white male makes
- Unemployment of Black Americans tends to be about 2:1 for every white American.

There are significant systemic inequities in our country, and it is complicated; there are many reasons for it. But I do believe that God's heart grieves as He sees those who are oppressed and struggling and wants them to flourish. So may we all "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God."