

What Does the Lord Require of You? (Micah 6:8)

Intro: What is God looking for out of His people? Let's consider what has been called one of the most comprehensive and all-embracing statements of the OT.

Micah lived during a period in Israel's history very much like our own. Through the usually good leadership of King Uzziah the kingdom of Judah had regained a position of power in Palestine through several military victories. The economy of Israel was prospering through commercial expansion. But, as is often the case in good times, the people's hearts began to turn away from the Lord. They were not close to Him. They had gotten away from His law; and now God was using various surrounding nations to bring Israel back to her knees. Micah's job was to announce that God was bringing Israel to justice for her sins.

On the other hand I am filled with power—with the Spirit of the Lord—and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin. (Micah 3:8)

In chapter six God challenges Israel to meet him in court and there we find the answer to this important question, “What does God want from His people?”.

God defends His conduct with the people as He charges Israel with unfaithfulness to Him, v. 1-5

The mountain and hills are called upon to be the jury as God challenges the Israelites to explain their unfaithful conduct.

Hear now what the Lord is saying, “Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth, because the Lord has a case against His people; even with Israel He will dispute. (Micah 6:1-2)

God speaks first; He presents his case in the form of a question:

“My people, what have I done to you, and how have I wearied you? Answer Me. (Micah 6:3)

God rehearses some of the righteous acts He has performed for Israel in the past.

“Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and from Shittim to Gilgal, in order that you might know the righteous acts of the Lord.” (Micah 6:4-5)

God's question is powerful and pointed. Basically God is saying, “From the time I delivered you from Egypt until you first set your feet in the promised land of Canaan, I've only conducted myself righteously toward you; now tell me, what did I do to deserve this?”

I wonder sometimes when God looks down upon man, if He could break the silence, He might say the same thing to:

This nation

The person who does not acknowledge Him or His will

Even His people who are too preoccupied with other things

But what do you do, when you know God's got your number!?

Micah reveals what is necessary to get God's blessings again

Israel knew that God had set forth an irrefutable case. God had done nothing to deserve such treatment; but what will it take to be restored to God's favor? It is as if the prophet brings the words of Israel back to God.

With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings with yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah 6:6-7)

If I've understood the intent of these questions, then those asking are acknowledging the depth of their guilt and they are thinking of how far they would have to go to make things right. And so they start with the typical sacrifice required by the Law and keep ascending in degree until they think of the ultimate sacrifice, that of their own children. But the people may have been surprised by the answer God gives through the prophet.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Micah's words from the Lord it seems to me are designed to say three important things:

The point in all of these things is that no amount of ritual service can ever take the place of repentance and humble obedience to His will! What God is wanting is not some stupendous display of guilt, but genuine repentance.

For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (Psalm 51:16-17)

And we may also add that God does not ask us to do impossible things. If God had asked for a rivers of oil who could have afforded it? Or a human sacrifice, who could have found the faith to do it? What God wants is not a mystery; in fact He had already asked for what He wanted! "He has told you what is good!"

What God wants is to for us to treat one another right!

To do justice--To act toward God and man in accord with his revealed standard of conduct. It is to treat others fairly.

To love kindness--to show a compassionate warmheartedness toward our fellow man.

What God wants is for us to let Him be God!

To exalt the Lord to His true position as Creator and ruler of all, the provider of all that we have. Show that respect by reverencing His name, expressing our dependence upon him, obeying His laws.

What Micah revealed to Israel beautifully states what God has always wanted out of man as His creation—to treat each other right and simply let Him be God!

Conclusion: As I read these verses, I see an amazing irony. What amazes me about this passage is not how far man must go to be in God's favor; but how far God would go for man to be in His favor. God never asked neither Israel nor us to make the ultimate sacrifice to get into His favor; but He has been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for us to be in His favor. He never asked Israel or us to “present our firstborn for our rebellious acts”; but He so loved the world “that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).

All God asks us to believe in the adequacy of His sacrifice and repent, showing that faith and repentance in baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins!