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Title: Required: Do Justice

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [Micha 6:8](#), [Luke 4:18-19](#)

E-mail: [Danny Gulden](#)



The word required gets our attention/maybe you remember getting your syllabus in school/check for the suggested readings or work, but really looking for the **required** readings/or looking over a job description/required attributes for the ideal candidate gets our attention.

Long ago, the prophet Micah sought to get people's attention when it came to matters of faith when he asked the question ***What Does the Lord Require of You?*** What is required in the life of a person of faith? There answer to that question holds what no better summary of the neighborly ethic voiced by the prophets, urged in the commandments and incarnated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Today, we begin a three-week series called Required/we will explore the three ethics of living voiced by the prophet Micah in this biblical text: *"He has told you O Mortal, 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."* (Micah 6:8)

Micah has raised a soul searching question at a time when people are wondering what God really wants/God and the people are seeking to reestablish a right relationship/They have forgotten their story and they have forgotten the saving power of God/they have fallen out of relationship with both God and with one another/It is a fractured community/ God is also tired of empty words/God is deeply disappointed because the people have failed to create the type of community that a loving and liberating God envisions/

What Does the Lord Require of You? The first requirement of the Lord is to "do justice."

This week I thought about a scene from the movie The Empire Strikes Back/There is a scene where Yoda is teaching Luke Skywalker how to master and how to use the Force. Luke is struggling a bit and doesn't have the confidence in the Force that he really needs to have. Luke is tasked with using the Force to raise his ship, the X-Wing, out of a swamp but he is pretty doubtful he can do it. He tells Yoda, "I'll try." Yoda says, "Try Not.- Do or Do Not- There is no try."

First requirement is not to try justice. You can almost picture Micah saying, there is no try, there is either do or do not.

Understanding biblical justice/not the scale of right and wrong/ rather how we establish and restore community while balancing common good with personal good.

There are three types of justice.

- Commutative Justice- relationships between members of a community
- Distributive Justice- ensuring equitable distribution of good, benefits, and burdens of a community
- Social Justice- reflects the social order necessary to achieve the kingdom of God.

One of the issues facing the church today when it comes to “Doing Justice” is that there is deep division in our nation, deep division in the communities in which we live, work, and go to school, and even in many of our religious communities there is deep division. So, we don’t want to address anything that may be seen as too controversial, for fear of upsetting people or further fracturing the community. I imagine you experience this today with certain people with whom you cannot have certain conversations.

Micah was speaking 700 years before Jesus’ time and Israel was in the midst of a good time the temple was crowded, offerings were over budget, but Micah sensed something was off. This is where this challenge of What Does the Lord Require? comes from.

Jesus would make this a central part of his mission/he was well versed in the prophets of Israel/first public sermon in his home synagogue in Nazareth and he chooses to speak the words of another prophet, Isaiah/

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18-19

As followers of Jesus, this should get our attention.

There is a story about a couple of log splitters/working together to cut logs/and one of them misses and accidentally cuts off his finger/well, there’s a scramble to get the finger, put it on ice, and together they rush to the local hospital/they run in and the person at the desk in the emergency room didn’t even look up/they explained what was happening and yet still the person at the desk continued with their paperwork and drinking his coffee/the log splitters needed to do something to get this person’s attention/so one took the finger and plopped in right down into the full cup of coffee/that got the desk attendant’s attention

Jesus is attempting to get our attention here/Think about it, there had been religious people claiming what God desired and what God was about/then Jesus shows up in his hometown synagogue/the place and the community where he grew up/there is word on the street that Mary and Joseph’s boy might be something special/maybe even the messiah/his first public sermon/his first words in his hometown/and these are the words he chooses

- Good News to the Poor
- Release to the Captives
- Sight to the Blind
- Freedom to the Oppressed

This is what God is passionate about/Around 700 years earlier, Micah had told people that the Lord required us to do justice

And Now 2000 or so years later/ these words of Jesus are still working on us, his followers, to pay attention to what God desires from you and I

Rob Bell, in his new book, *Everything is Spiritual*, tells about the period of his life when he was in seminary, 23 years old, and he was serving at a church as a youth ministry intern. The youth minister said to his kids in the youth group one night, let's go out into the neighborhood and knock on doors and see what we can do to help. This was a church in the area near the Rose Bowl in California and the foot of the San Gabriel mountains and most of the kids in the group commuted into town to go to church. They were from bedroom and suburban communities. He took the group of kids out and knocked on the door of the first house. A woman in her 20s baby on her hip answered. We are from the church across the street. Anything we can do to help? Yes, yes there is. I have no food and I have no money to buy food. For two days now I've been feeding my baby nothing but sugar water. The kids were shocked and they began to organize and pooled their money together. Some went to the grocery store and some stayed to talk with her. Others went into other homes in the neighborhood and began this great conversation about what it means to be a person of faith, what it meant to love your neighbor. Several weeks later, as the kids gathered for youth group again, the youth minister came over to Rob and said, "There is going to be a moment in this talk I'm giving where I want you to open all of the blinds in the room so that the kids can see the mountains." There were wildfires going on with smoke and fire. The moment came and Rob opened the blinds and the youth minister went on telling the kids about eternal punishment if they didn't believe the right things and those fires they saw outside. Rob Bell was mortified, mortified. He said right then and there he made a promise to God that he would never use shame, guilt, punishment, or fear in his ministry. He would proclaim that God's love has already been given to the world. It's already been given to every single person that has been, is or will be alive.

There is something about the power of God's love that moves us to care for that world and for the people in the world/Micah and Jesus are both on to something about the nature of God's love/Once you have experienced it for yourself, you cannot help but do justice/You can't help but ask what those kids were asking, "how can we help?"

God's will IS justice, for all to know the fullness of life/We pray this each and every week,

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

What Does the Lord Require of You? To do justice. There is no try. There is only do or do not.

Will you pray with me?