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Title: Required: Love Kindness

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Text: [Micah 6:6-7](#)

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"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*

We are in the second week of a series called Required, looking at a question posed long ago, around 700 BCE, to the people of God.

What does the Lord require of you?

What does the Lord require for faithful living and for the world to be as God

intends for it to be? We began the series last week by looking at the first requirement, *to do justice*.

This is the second of the requirements that the prophet Micah mentions, *to love kindness*. Love Kindness...it sounds like a bumper sticker doesn't it? If not a bumper sticker, then it sounds like sticky sweet advice that someone gives you so you will quit talking to them. "Just go and love kindness." But it is so much more.

What we read as love kindness is the Hebrew word *hesed*. It's a deep and rich concept. It's a life-giving concept. *Hesed* refers to God's steadfast and loyal love to you and me, to all of humanity.

It's the kind of love that is not dependent on us pleasing God.

It's the kind of love that is not an emotional response, rather it is inherent to God's nature. It simply is who God is. *God is love*.

If you are familiar with the hymn or the song, *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, one of the verses is:

I sing because I'm happy,

I sing because I'm free, for His eye is on the sparrow,

and I know He watches me.

It's a reminder that God's love is everywhere in all things, and that includes you.

As I mentioned last week, Micah is preaching to a community that has misunderstood what God wants from them. They have lost track of their purpose as God's people. Micah imagines a trial of sorts between God and the people.

God speaks in a way that might remind us of a parent speaking to a child who has ignored the unconditional love of the parent. And the people of Israel miss the point, much like we often do today. They don't understand what God wants from them.

"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? ⁷Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:6-7)

They are religious, there is no doubt about that. Their problem is not a lack of religion.

Their problem is that their idea of religion is far from what God hopes for them. They have missed the point.

In this text, they are offering God all of these things, good things, material things.

And they are way off base on what God wants.

It's why we get the clarity of Micah 6:8, part of which is the command to love kindness. To love God and love others the way God loves all of humankind,

- A love that is loyal
- A love that is unconditional
- A love that is life giving

Materially, the people have offered God the world and none of it matters to God.

As we seek to grow closer to God and God's will, what are we offering to God that doesn't really matter? And where are we failing short in terms of what we should be offering to God.

I've read several books and articles over the years that consistently point out the number one reason people don't want anything to do with Christianity. They find the church and they find Christians to be judgmental and exclusive.

Think about it- people and churches spending time believing that God desires them to be judgmental and exclusive, when God is actually a grace-filled and loving God. God's love includes everyone, no exceptions. When we talk about transformation in Christ, one of the ethics of living is loving as God loves. Live Hessed. Don't hoard, rather give it away freely, just as God does

"Love is renewable resource, the more you give love, the more you receive love." – Will Willimon

Lucy Carlson is five. She lives in a household where they often have conversations about current events. Following the death of George Floyd in May, Lucy was coloring on her front porch one morning when she looked to her Mom and said, "I think it's important that we know our neighbors. I'm going to meet them all. If they need help, I want them to know where I live so they can come to me to help. I'm going to have them sign my paper, so I know their name. But not in cursive."

The next day, carrying an enormous piece of paper and a pouch of Crayola markers, Lucy and her mom headed to the first house. The family was cleaning out the garage when Lucy stepped up confidently. "Hi, I'm Lucy and this is my mom Erin. We live across the street. I think it's important to know your neighbors. So, I want you to sign my paper. You can come to my house if you need help and I'll help you.

Each family member took a marker and wrote down their name.

Lucy would spend several summer days going house to house. She'd bring her poster sized paper and her pouch of markers and give each person her customary statement.

This summer, in her neighborhood, Lucy met her neighbors. She also learned from her neighbors how to make jam. Her mom received multiple offers from neighbors who were now friends to have their teenagers babysit. A retired music teacher started teaching Lucy to play the harp. Lucy learned some yoga poses she loves to show off. She met a woman from China.

Loving people requires us starting somewhere. Micah might say that practicing *hesed* requires us to start somewhere.

Earlier I said that love kindness sounds like a bumper sticker. Well, maybe it actually should be. We need the reminder and the proclamation that God's love is unconditional, it is loyal, and it includes all. It is in all things

For you and for the world to know the life God intends, we are required to love kindness. The greatest power we have, the greatest opportunity we have, in any given moment, is to love others the way God loves us.

Will you pray?