

The Way Forward - Micah 6:1-15
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

One of the scary realities we discover in the Scriptures is the fact that people can be uber religious and completely miss the point of the Gospel. We see this in the New Testament with the Pharisees who were incredibly persistent in keeping the rules and statutes found in the Law of God, yet they were arrogant and spiteful people who completely missed their Messiah. In fact, they are front in center in the conspiracy that led to his crucifixion. They are exhibit A in revealing that it is possible to spend your life climbing a religious ladder only to get to the top and realize it is actually against the wrong building.

But religion is so compelling to us because in religion we can get a metric that helps us know if we are doing what is required. "Just give me the list and I will do it, tell me what to do!" This is the basic sentiment of so many who seek religion. Religion (as I am defining it in this sermon) involves our attempt to please and honor God with our spiritual activities, rituals, attendance, and good works. The focus of all religion is on the things I must do in order to please God, the sacrifices I must make to atone for my sin and make myself right with God. So we go to church, say our "Hail Marys", give our money regularly, and live by a certain set of ethics and morals. But the problem with religion is that it generally fails to produce the sort of people who actually reflect the beauty of Jesus. For many, religion provides a "to do" list that gives us permission to keep the list without it actually changing hearts and other behaviors. This is the problem in Micah's day. They are doing the religious duties on the Sabbath, but it has created the illusion that they can cheat in business, do violence to the poor, and keep their cultural power. Their religious pursuits have done little to impact their true identity. The Pharisees, on the other hand, represent a different approach to religion, as their dedication to religious activity created people who externally did it all, yet became judgmental and proud in their pursuit. In their case, their entire identity is tied to their religious performance which also allows them to stand in judgment of anyone who is not as moral or theologically astute.

Our chapter in Micah is important because it helps us see the distinction between religion and the Gospel. Chapter six begins the third and final indictment section of Micah. In each indictment, Micah comes as God's covenant attorney who brings his charges against Israel for their idolatry, injustice, and oppression. Yet, each indictment has offered a hope connected to the future Redeemer and King who would restore God's people and usher in the True Kingdom. But this third indictment oracle also has a different tone, offering Israel a way forward, a path to true repentance and change. Yet, that path forward is not tied to better adherence to their religious rituals and activities. Rather, their religious rituals and activity was God's gift to them to point them to the beauty of the God who saved them and the call to be transformed by His grace and goodness.

So God first reminds them of His acts of grace that made them a people. He rescued them from slavery in Egypt, raised up leaders to guide them through the wilderness, protected them on the journey, and gave them the Promised Land. This is the basic meaning of verses 4-5. God is calling them to remember how they were rescued and remember that this is their identity. They were God's people, and that identity had nothing to do with their morals or religious activity. It had everything to do with God's grace and power, acting against Egypt, parting the sea and Jordan River, and giving them an inheritance they did not deserve. But this should have created a certain type of people, shaped by the God who loved, forgives, and saves them. So Micah gives them the simplest shorthand for lives that are shaped by the grace of God. They do justice. In other words, they were in poverty, refugees, orphans, broken people. And God rescued them and lifted them up. They love kindness. In this case, the translation is not quite what the text says. The word translated "kindness" in the text is actually the Hebrew word "Chesed", which refers to God's covenant love for them, His faithful,

never giving up, always pursuing, forever love for His people. Loved people should love. And they are to walk humbly with their God. Religion gives us a system, but the Gospel draws us as sons and daughters into a relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

Religion is actually a cheap and dangerous counterfeit of the Gospel. We can spend our lives going to church, being moral, doing good works, being generous, and more, all while either using religion to prop up a self-centered identity or having our religious performance being the center of our identity. Religion says, "You do!." The Gospel, on the other hand declares what God has done for us through Christ. Religion says, "Try!", but the Gospel calls us to trust in Christ. Religion roots our identity in performance, but the Gospel reminds us that our identity is in Christ. Don't accept the cheap substitute.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Judges 7	Judges 8	Judges 9	Judges 10	Judges 11	Judges 12	Judges 13

Reading from this past week: Micah 6:1-16

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Micah 6:1-15

Family Worship

Song - *O Great God*

<https://youtu.be/gOPbanJKWE8?si=UeFGrERudfsBXYYA4>

Gospel Project

Unit: The Death & Resurrection of Jesus

Story: Jesus was crucified

Big Picture Question: How is Jesus the perfect King?

Answer: Jesus perfectly rules over the universe as the King of Kings.

Scripture: Mark 15

New City Catechism

Question #46: What is the Lord's Supper?

Answer: Christ commanded all Christians to eat bread and to drink from the cup in thankful remembrance of him.

Verse: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Scripture

Micah 6:1-16

- What are some of the indictments against God's people in this chapter? How have you seen or experienced religious people who use their religious activity as permission to do awful things?
- What does God tell them to remember in verses 3-5? How does this picture the Gospel for us?
- What would it look like in our context when Christians:
 - ▶ Do justice
 - ▶ Love kindness
 - ▶ Walk humbly with God

Prayer

*Pray that we would be a church that does justice, loves kindness, and walks humbly with our God.

*Pray for our ministry to teenagers and for our Director of Youth Ministry Travis Dierker.