

**Text: Micah 6:8 (Pew Bible pg.919)**

**Title: “What Does the Lord Require of You?”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Open your Bibles to Micah 1. You may need to look at the Table of Contents in your Bible. I’m preaching a message each week from a different one of the 17 books of the Prophets in the order that they appear in biblical history. Just to show you where this happens in history, we’re talking about a period after the age of the kings David and Solomon. At this time the faith of the Israelites had grown cold and complacent. They were chasing after pagan gods and violating the covenant that God made with them. Israel split into two kingdoms, and in both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom there were a series of kings. Some were good and godly but most were evil and godless. It is into this period God sends the Prophets.

**Micah 1:1 - The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.**

We learn here that Micah prophesied during the same circumstances and times as the great prophet Isaiah, a little over 700 years before Christ came. But Isaiah and Micah moved in different circles. Isaiah prophesied in the capital; Micah prophesied in the country. Micah is from a little town called Moresheth, about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Note: God uses big people in little places. You may think that you don’t have much influence because you live in a little circle, and you don’t have access to powerful or important people, and that you won’t ever make much of an impact. The Word of the Lord came to Micah of Moresheth. God speaks *to* people in little places and He speaks *through* people in little places. Never forget that.

As a matter of fact, a marvelous prophecy about the coming of Christ is found in the book of Micah.

**Micah 5:2 - “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”**

God can do amazing things in small, seemingly insignificant places.

These prophets were not only prophets; they were patriots. They were concerned about the direction of their nation. They were also revivalists. They were continually calling for the people of God to change their ways and to come back to God. We see that in Micah 1:2.

**Micah 1:2 - Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it, that the Sovereign LORD may witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.**

Now you know something is not right when the Sovereign Lord has to be a witness *against* His people. Stuart Briscoe has written a commentary on the Minor Prophets entitled *Taking God*

*Seriously.* And one thing you see in all of these books is that the people of God have failed to take God seriously. They're playing games with Him, living lives that are filled with hypocrisy and compromises. So God has to take the witness stand in the high court of heaven to testify against His people.

There's one verse in Micah 6 that I am working toward, but for you to get the full impact of that verse I want us to start with ...

## **1. THE ANCIENT SITUATION (Micah 1-3)**

Micah's message was mostly for Judah and Jerusalem (the Southern Kingdom), however he saw what was happening to the north in Israel, and he had something to say about that from the Lord.

**Micah 1:6 - "Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations."**

What you have described here is the utter destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians, which happened in Micah's lifetime. God used the Assyrians to bring judgment and discipline upon His own people who had rejected Him. Listen, if God will do that to His own covenant people, the Jews, how can any nation expect to sin and reject God with impunity?

But Micah saw that what happened to the Northern Kingdom would one day happen to the Southern Kingdom.

**Micah 1:9 - For her wound is incurable; it has come to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself.**

So what happened to the Northern Kingdom will one day happen to the Southern Kingdom if they don't repent. Repent of what? What is the testimony God is making against His people? We're told in the Micah 2.

**Micah 2:1 - 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.**

**Micah 2:2 - They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.**

Let me explain the situation. When the Israelites came into the Promised Land of Canaan the Lord divided the land among the twelve tribes of Israel. Then that was divided among the families. So each family had their own piece of land to live on and to raise their flocks and their crops. It was given to each Israelite as an inheritance from the Lord. So when someone lost their land, they lost something that God had given them. Sometimes people would hit on hard times and they would have to sell their land to make ends meet. And so inevitably some people began to acquire vast amounts of land. But you may have read something in your Bible about the year of Jubilee. Every 50<sup>th</sup> year all the land that had been sold reverted back to its original owner. The land was to be kept in the family.

Now what was happening in Micah's time was that there were unscrupulous business people who devised schemes by which they would buy up property from others, and get tremendously wealthy. To do that they resorted to all kinds of corrupt practices to defraud people of their land. And that's what behind v.2.

**Micah 2:2 - They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.**

So these people are making plans to do evil. And God is making His plans as well.

**Micah 2:3 - Therefore, the LORD says: "I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity.**

You see, God is a holy and just God and He must punish sin. So God has already drawn up the plans for their judgment. But He doesn't want them to perish. In His grace He is still reaching to them. That's the whole point of sending a prophet. He's still speaking truth to them. It's not like God sits back and watches all this happening and is not going to intervene. You need to know that God is actively involved and interested in the way of your life, even when you are rebelling against Him.

That's the ancient situation. Next we have ...

## **2. THE DIVINE REQUIREMENTS (Micah 6)**

Now in Micah 6 we have what looks like a courtroom scene. And in this court God Himself is the Judge, the Witness and the Jury ... all in one. And Judah is on trial. And the people have been declared guilty. And Micah asks a rhetorical question, as though it were coming from the people:

**Micah 6:6 - With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?**

So the people were saying to Micah, "Okay, so we're wrong. But we still want to come into your presence. What are we supposed to do? What will please the Lord?" And they think that they can bring their sacrifices and God will forget, as if they could buy their way back into the good graces of God.

**Micah 6:7 - Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**

And in v.8 Micah answers the question. This is one of the better known verses in Micah, and you can see why it's so important when you understand the ancient situation.

**Micah 6:8 - He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

**ILLUSTRATION** – This is one of the great statements of OT. In simple and beautiful terms it sums up the heart of our walk with the Lord. If you’ve ever been to the Library of Congress, this verse is displayed over the section dedicated to the role of religion in our land. At least one US president has had this verse read at their inauguration.

So the Lord shows us what it means to be truly “good.” Note: It seems to me that Micah is starting with the fruits and is working down toward the roots. It starts with the fruit.

- **“To act justly...”** – There was no justice when crooks were allowed to get away with stealing land from others. They were to be fair in their dealings with others. Don’t act selfishly. Think about the needs of others.

**Isaiah 1:17 - learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.**

Act justly. But there’s something that is at the root of this fruit:

- **“To love mercy...”** – This word “mercy” is one of the great words of the OT ... *chesed*. It means steadfast, loyal love. It is the love and mercy first shown by God. It is the heart response of love rooted in commitment to the well-being of others. It’s the equivalent of the *agape* love displayed in the NT.

It is this kind of *love* that we are *love*. They were not showing mercy to people. Instead they were taking advantage of them.

And there’s something that is at the root of all of this:

- **“To walk humbly with your God...”** – Literally it is “make yourself humble in your walking with God.” It’s being responsive to God in humility, gladly submitting to His will. But these people were strutting around arrogantly thinking that God was lucky to have them on His side.

So there you have the root and the fruits. When I walk humbly with God, I will love what He loves and I will have His heart of mercy. And when I have a heart of mercy I will show it by the way I deal with other people.

Now notice that it says that the Lord had already showed (literally “told”) them what is good. When did He do that? He told it to them, among other places, in the holy Law of Moses.

**EXAMPLE** – One day a religious leader came to Jesus to test him with a question. And the question was, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” (Remember Micah said, “He has showed you, O man, what is good.”)

**Matthew 22:37 - Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”** (Micah ... “walk humbly with your God”)

**Matthew 22:38 - This is the first and greatest commandment.**

**Matthew 22:39 - And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** (Micah ... "act justly ... love mercy")

**Matthew 22:40 - All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."**

That's what Micah was saying. And this is what God really expects of us ... not all the ritualism and religion. He wants us to change the way we relate to Him and to others. But there's one big problem here. God has put a requirement on us that we cannot achieve ourselves. God *requires* something we can't *acquire*. The Israelites tried to meet the requirements, but they just kept falling short. And consequently the Lord will punish them in His wrath:

**Micah 6:13 - Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins.**

Now we might stand from our vantage point and shake our heads at this atrocious behavior by the Israelites. But we need to be reminded that Israel had a disease, and we have that same disease. It is called sin. What drove the Israelites to selfishly steal from others? Sin. What drove the Israelites to be merciless and heartless in the treatment of others? Sin. What bred the pride and arrogance in their hearts? Sin.

And you and I have the same dreadful disease, and deserve the same dreadful punishment for our sins.

**Romans 3:9-11 - What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.**

And guess what? We are no more able to fulfill those righteous requirements than they were. We act unjustly ... we lack mercy ... we don't walk humbly with God.

So does the Lord just give up people? No, God takes the initiative.

### **3. THE ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT (Micah 7:18-20)**

The fact is that we cannot do what God requires in our own strength. What in the world will God do with us? Well God has a plan that will truly transform people so they can fulfill the requirements of the Lord. And it won't just be for Israel. It will be for all the nations.

In order for us to be justified in this matter two things have to happen. We need forgiveness and we need transformation, and Micah sees down through history to the day when God would provide both through His Son Jesus Christ.

First, God provides forgiveness:

**Micah 7:18 - Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.**

Micah's name means "who is like God?" And the mercy God expects of us is first seen in His own glorious character.

**Micah 7:19 - You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.**

So there is the forgiveness we need.

Second, God provides for the transformation. And how God does this is amazing. Micah looks far off into the future to an event where God would forever change His people. He sees the light of a new day dawning. But this new day is actually two days separated by thousands of years. The first day is the first coming of the Lord. The second day is the Second Coming of the Lord.

**Micah 4:1 - In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.**

**Micah 4:2 - Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

Here is the salvation that will be available through the Lord Jesus Christ. "He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths" (v.2). "Walk" is the same word as in Micah 6:8. We can't walk humbly with our God until He teaches us His ways. And that's what happens for us in Christ. He writes His Law upon our hearts and changes us forever.

God's glorious plans through His Son Jesus Christ are to work a change in our lives that will enable us to meet His holy requirements.

**Romans 8:3 - For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,**

**Romans 8:4a - in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us...**

So walk out of this place today to the truly "good" life. Walk humbly with your God. Submit your life to Jesus Christ every minute of every day, depending on His righteousness, not your own. Then let His love and mercy fill your heart to overflowing so that in every relationship, every encounter you will treat people as God would treat them.