

“Hear what the Lord says:

‘Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.

Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations of the earth;
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.’

“Hear what the LORD says.”

The LORD calls his people.

He calls me and you,

calls us before the court of the whole earth.

The great and high mountains will hear.

We are given an opportunity to plead our case.

And the LORD too will make his case

before the greatness of all creation.

“For the LORD has a controversy with his people.”

The controversy has to do with truth.

The LORD is asking the people to be honest with themselves,

to look deep within

and to tell the truth

about the state of their souls.

Jesus too is concerned with soul work.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth...

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy...

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you
and persecute you
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely
on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,
for in the same way
they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Jesus is clear,
after the reckoning has come,
To the meek,
will be given the earth.
And heaven will belong to the poor in spirit,
will belong to those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.

And what is righteousness?

To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul and
with all our mind, and with all our strength.

And how do we love God?

“Truly I tell you,
just as you did it to one of the least of these,
who are members of my family,
you did it to me.”¹

¹ Mark 12:30-31

God draws no distinctions:

God's people are reminded of this, time and time again,

“For the Lord your God loves the strangers,
providing them food and clothing.
You also shall love the stranger,
for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”²

When you make your offering before the LORD your God,
this shall be your response,
“A wandering Aramean was my ancestor.”³

“If you do not oppress the alien,
then I will dwell with you in this place.”⁴

“When the alien resides with you in your land,
you shall not oppress the alien.
The alien who resides with you
shall be as the citizen among you;
you shall love the alien as yourself,
for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.
I AM the LORD your God.”⁵

The LORD brings a case against his people,
because they have forgotten
both the source and the purpose of their salvation.

² Deuteronomy 10:18-19

³ Deuteronomy 26:5

⁴ Jeremiah 7:5-7

⁵ Leviticus 19:33-34 and 24:22

God, the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth,
 he is the source of all life,
 including the new life of salvation.

And God's purpose in saving us?
 That we might be a blessing to the whole world.⁶

But these things are easily forgotten.
 the people of God too often turn back in on themselves

And so the LORD brings his case before the court of creation.

“O my people,
 what have I done to you?
 In what have I wearied you?
 Answer me!”
 I have redeemed you from slavery;
 “you know the saving acts of the LORD.”

The people know;
 we have seen salvation.
 God knows this.
 From Abraham
 to Moses
 to Job
 and again here in Micah,
 the Lord recites the litany of salvation,
 those times when the LORD
 has redeemed his people from death.

⁶ Zechariah 8:13b

The LORD seeks to come before the court of the earth,
to bring his complaint against the people,
because they have forgotten what salvation looks like;
they have forgotten their obligations to the LORD.

Why do we read this,
here in church today?

Could it be that we too forget our obligations to the LORD?
Could it be that the words of the prophet Micah
go right along with following a savior like Jesus?

Who said to the Pharisees,
“Woe to you, hypocrites!
For you tithe...
and have neglected the weightier matters of the law:
justice
and mercy
and faith.
It is these you ought to have practiced
without neglecting the others.”⁷

Just in case you missed it,
Jesus says:
“you need to tithe,
don’t neglect that.
But first and foremost ALWAYS,
are justice
and mercy
and faith.”

⁷ Matthew 23:23

Micah says it this way:

“And what does the LORD require of you?
 But to do justice,
 and to love kindness,
 and to walk humbly with your God?”

It doesn't sound like much,
 but it's everything.

Does the LORD require that we win?
 Does the LORD require that we are popular?
 Does the LORD require that we make a showy offering,
 to be sure that our friends know how good we've got it?

No.

Do justice,
 love kindness,
 walk humbly with your God.

I say it all the time,
 but it always bears repeating,
 because I'm always too willing to forget:
it's never easy - trusting God.
 Jesus didn't always find it easy.
 And it's not easy. - Following Jesus,

“Take up your cross and follow me.”

None of it is easy:
 taking up the cross,
 or following him -
 into forgiveness,
 humility,
 mercy.

He said to give all your money to the poor and follow him.
We all know that's hard.

But this,
no less so:

“Do justice,
love kindness,
walk humbly with your God.”

It doesn't sound like much,
but it's everything.

Every time they start talking,
the prophets or Jesus,
it's always got to do with God
and it's always got to do with our neighbors.

Not just the ones on **our** street;
the ones on the streets we pretend don't even exist.

If it's about loving God,
it's about loving neighbor.

The two have never been separated.
At least that's what I read in the book.

It's never been about saving ourselves
It's always been about the salvation of the world.

A Love big enough to do that.
A God big enough to believe in.

What does the LORD require of you?

Do justice;
love kindness,
walk humbly with your God.

It doesn't sound like much,
but it's everything.

It's a mission statement for all baptized people.
It's a tall order.

Now, it won't be so bad for the first little while.
When we pass the peace in just a few minutes,
greeting those in the pews close to us,
we will all do it with kindness.
After all, we're right here in church,
in front of God and everybody.

But it does get more difficult.

When you go home
 and walk into the argument left over from last night.
 Walk humbly with your God.

When you read Facebook comments,
 or write your own:
do justice yes,
but don't forget to love kindness.

When you give your money or raise your voice to support a cause,
 do justice;
 love kindness.

In the middle of the third meeting this week,
 or waiting on the phone call that seems like it's not going to come,
 or eating dinner alone.

When you walk into your life,
 make sure that it's full of *real life*:
 do justice,
 love kindness,
 walk,
 wherever your feet take you,
 walk humbly with your God.
 It doesn't sound like much,
 but it's everything.

“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?”