DAILY READINGS

micah

ACT JUSTLY
LOVE MERCY
WALK HUMBLY
MICAH 6:8

NOVEMBER 4 - 8
Day 1 – Shouldn’t You Know Justice?

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Micah 3:1-4
Rhetorical questions need no answer because the answer is obvious, it is inherent in the question. Clearly the nation’s leaders should know and do what is right, but they do not do it. They have failed in their duties to lead properly. In fact, so badly have they performed, so warped are their values, so corrupted is their leadership, that Micah inverts the famous call of Amos 5:15 to “Hate evil, love good” and accuses them of hating good and loving evil, coupling it with a (metaphorical) accusation of cannibalism. This horrific image is designed to show the leaders’ behaviour in the most graphic way imaginable. This is what they are doing to their own people. Rather than shepherding their flock, they are feasting on them; rather than dispensing justice, they are fleecing them, abusing their power in the name of greed.

Rhetorical questions need no answer, but the prophet provides one and twists the knife further by coming at the question from the other end. Shouldn’t the leaders know justice? Shouldn’t they be judged for their crimes against the very people they are supposed to lead, guide and protect? Shouldn’t they be punished for their iniquity? Shouldn’t God’s justice be visited upon them? Again, the answer is obvious: yes they will be judged and will feel God’s wrath poured out upon them as judgement for the way they exploited their people, the poor, the widowed, the orphan. They will know God’s punishment and they will be in for a shock when that punishment comes and God does not intervene to rescue them.

Questions to Consider
How much do you think the leadership of a nation defines its character? Why might this be important?

Prayer
Lord God, you spoke truth to those in power, through your prophets and through your son. You call us to do the same. May we do so fearlessly and always in the service of those damaged by the abuse of power. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)
Day 2 – A Lone Voice

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Micah 3:5-12
It is not easy to be a lone voice calling for justice in the midst of corruption, exploitation and injustice. Confronting those in power when they abuse their power is never easy. But standing on the side of justice – and at the side of those oppressed by injustice – is what God calls us to do, just like he called Micah to do. When other prophets and priests were leading the people astray, Micah stood up and proclaimed the justice – and just punishment – of God and denounced those in positions of power. So powerful were his words (treasonous even, from the leaders' point of view) they echoed down the years to the time of Jeremiah, one hundred years later, when that prophet, also confronting a corrupt leadership cabal, was similarly threatened with death. It was only the words of Micah, quoted back to the king (3:12 in particular), that turned the king from putting Jeremiah to death.

The words of Micah echo around us as well, today, and, if we are listening properly, present us with a series of questions in need of answering. In the midst of the clamour and clatter and comfort of our lives, do we still have the ability to hear the voice of God calling for justice? When our own entrenched ideas and beliefs are challenged by God, do we respond? Do we fail to see suffering? Do we block out injustice? Do the cries of people in distress fall on deaf ears? Or, like Micah, when God speaks, do we listen, obey, and act, no matter the cost to our prestige, popularity or comfort?

Questions to Consider
What is the difference between Micah and the false prophets? How does this difference help define who we are in our society?

Prayer
Heavenly Father, remove the blinders from our eyes and the walls from our hearts that stop us seeing injustice. Push us to look harder and deeper at our world and its people, to see how you see. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)
Day 3 – Indictment as History Lesson

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Micah 6:1-5
Again we begin with the call to “Hear”, as we return to the themes of Micah 1-3, and God calls the courtroom into session once more. God has a complaint against his people, a lawsuit to bring against them of cosmic proportions, as attested to by the call to plead the case before the mountains and the hills. The arrival promised in chapter 1 has now eventuated: God is here, bringing suit against his rebellious, unfaithful people, calling upon them to tell him how he has offended them, only to immediately present them with a litany of past historical occasions in which he rescued them from destruction and delivered them from slavery into the promised land – a land that is now seriously under threat, not just from invading Assyrian armies, but also from the possible punishment that would follow a guilty verdict from God.

It is interesting that the majority of the accusation against Judah is taken up with a recitation of God's salvific acts on behalf of his people. It is more a history of redemption – liberation from slavery, guidance in the wilderness, deliverance from Balaam’s curse and the gift of the land itself – than a list of indictments. The point is that this history lesson is meant to remind the people of God’s great love and provision for them, the way he has walked with them, guided and protected them, and given them the gift of the covenant with him. This, in turn, should have led them to a life of covenant faithfulness, walking in the ways of God, to be holy as God is holy, a nation blessed so that others could be blessed.

Question to Consider
What would such a history lesson from your life look like?

Prayer
Loving Father, remind us of your saving power. Remind us of the times when you were with us, when you saved us, when you guided us and answered our cries. May we be slow to forget. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)
Day 4 – True Worship

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Micah 6:6-8
What is true worship? How are we to approach God? Micah gives three examples of what a person should bring before God, each building on and escalating the intensity of the one before. Burnt offerings, thousands of animals and streams of oil, leading finally to the offering of the first-born child: the value increases each time as does the sacrifice required of the one performing the sacrifice. But God does not want more and more of the same ritualistic actions that can be found in any society, and, despite the people’s sins, were no doubt still being ritualistically offered in the Temple at the time. Ethical behaviour is far more important than sacrificial rites, regardless of where such rites originated.

Notice how just as the three offerings mentioned increased in value, so are the answers to what God requires of us presented in the same way: a movement from acts of love for one’s neighbour (doing justice and loving kindness) through to acts illustrative of loving God (walking humbly with him). We are called to move from a life concerned with performing rituals that offer things to God, to a life given over in its entirety to God, a life filled with loving kindness towards all. These verses are not religious pieties. They are not feel-good spiritual bromides. They are the summation of what it means to be truly human – truly made in the image of God – from the one who made us and calls us to be his embodiment in this world. This is what is required of us as his people, in order to ensure that all people can flourish.

Questions to Consider
What does God NOT require? Why? What is our modern equivalent of these things?

Prayer
Almighty God, sink these verses deep inside us, transform us, and turn us into walking embodiments of true worship. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)
Day 5 – Judging Injustice

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Micah 6:9-16
God has finished arguing in court against his people. Now he moves on to the punishment that is coming, a punishment that will fall heavily upon the people. What God has called his people to – the ways of kindness and mercy and humility proclaimed in verses 6-8 – has been ignored, and contrasts with the behaviour they are accused of in verses 10-12. Their punishments will fit their crimes: those who gorge themselves, those who store things up for themselves, those who seek to enjoy their harvests – all will be disappointed. They will go hungry. What they save will be lost. What they plant will not be harvested. What they look forward to will be taken away. All of these things, so crucial to the life of the nation of Judah, will be taken away. Destruction and exile will follow, as the consequences of sin and rebellion.

God’s word is for all of us. He speaks to all of us. In this chapter of Micah we have seen that God has had something to say to everyone: king, priests, prophets, leaders, the general population. His message of compassion and kindness and justice is directed at everyone; living these values out is the way to be human. But God doesn’t just proclaim how we are to live and then walk away and leave us to it. He watches. He empowers. He guides. He remains with his people. And therefore, when his people stray, when his priests and prophets and leaders oppress and exploit his people and perpetuate injustice, he acts.

Questions to Consider
What is an appropriate response to God’s accusations against his people?
How do you respond when God calls you out on something?

Prayer
Loving Lord, thank you for loving us enough to correct us, and loving us enough to want us to join in your saving work. Teach us wisdom, love and faithfulness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)