

Proper 23 (28) - October 12, 2025

Micah 6:6-8

“God has told us.”

1. I have something to admit to you: when I interviewed to be your pastor ten years ago, I was pretty concerned about how much you spoke about your beloved pastor Dr. Bill Laws, thinking to myself “How am I ever going to get out from under this guy’s shadow?”
 - a. You are right to be proud of his leadership
 - i. In his long tenure with you, nearly 30 years all the way to the early 1970s, he led you into amazing work
 - ii. Within the congregation, he was both authoritative and approachable
 - iii. He was the who started the Friday Men’s group, to which I belong and which is an incredible support group
 - iv. Outside of the church, he offered pastoral and prophetic leadership in the community
 - v. You wanted me to know that he along with J. Irwin Miller, then CEO of Cummins, had worked to counter racist practices in town, including working to make banks lend mortgages to African American residents
 - vi. As you can imagine, that kind of leadership created significant opposition, but he was determined and felt justified in his stance
 - b. But two things stood out for me as I considered coming to this church, and then as I agreed to do so:
 - i. Did I need to be “like” him? (something which I am sure is not possible)
 - ii. A more interesting question was this: How had his leadership involved your leadership as a congregation?
 - c. The solution to my concern turned out to be pretty simple:
 - i. My job wasn’t to be a new version of Dr. Laws, or try to fit into his very large shoes, instead my job was to help us all consider how it is that WE ALL get to live up to the legacy left by Dr. Laws and the FPC elders and members who backed him.
 - ii. That is to say, it was more important for me to lean into your identity as a congregation committed to social justice
 - iii. My role was to hold you accountable to those lofty ideals and foundational values which Dr. Laws helped you embody
 - iv. And then to do ministry together that was consistent with who you have been as a church for generations, albeit in the cultural context of our day
2. When we look at the legacy we live up to, the passage from Micah sets the bar for what God requires of us

- a. Today's beloved Micah passage actually comes as part of a larger harsh message for the Israelites who were his original audience
 - i. Micah was accusing them of having abandoned God
 - ii. Micah is screaming at the top of his lungs about corruption and unfaithfulness
 - iii. He condemns the people in power for taking bribes, the religious authorities for selling out, the prophets for "speaking for God" but only a message dictated by the highest bidder, and the people for losing their way and forgetting who they really were
 - iv. Micah doesn't pull any punches: Difficult days lay ahead of them, as direct consequences of their actions for turning their backs on God
 - b. But just when you think it can't get any worse, God clarifies that God does not turn God's back on the people – even the corrupt ones! – because God guides us through repentance and re-starting
 - i. And when we get the beautiful passage which is like a guiding light for us
 - ii. The relationship with God isn't kept up with empty gestures (no matter how holy)
 - iii. It's not kept up with religious practices (no matter how ancient)
 - iv. What God seeks from us is a heart that beats along with God's heart, and hands that do God's work
 - v. God 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?
 - vi. There are many ways in which God had described what was required of the people of ancient Israel
 - 1. There was the covenant with all of Abraham's descendants
 - 2. There was that covenant reaffirmed with women and men of faith
 - 3. There were the laws which Moses listed which would keep the people in relationship with God
3. Today we are affirming the connection we have with God by sharing our new Mission and Vision statements
- a. The creation of these statements is part of a process we've been involved in over the past year
 - i. We read them as part of our liturgy today
 - ii. Our mission statement embodies our theology, our purpose, and our core values. In fact, the Strategic Planning Team used the Micah passage as foundational in stating that theology. We intend that the mission statement will guide our entire congregation and help define what WE DO.
 - iii. We are saying that our mission is this: "As an inclusive community empowered by God's transforming love, we welcome all people through worship, compassionate service, care, and advocacy."

- iv. That frames what we hold dear and helps us clarify how we live that out.
 - v. Then, in addition to that, a vision statement is our picture of a preferred future in the context of our mission statement.
 - vi. That is to say, if we're on the right track, "We aspire to be known as a congregation who authentically celebrates diverse voices and co-creates engaging, accessible worship, which empowers us to connect and serve as a reflection of Jesus' love."
- b. These statements are not meant to be chiseled in stone. They are meant to be like a moment when we take a moment in our journey, check the map and maybe the compass or GPS, and we affirm the journey we are on, the journey we've been on for two hundred years.
- i. What is lasting is the relationship God has with us
 - ii. What is lasting is the legacy of Micah's simple and powerful guidance,
 - iii. What is lasting is the legacy of people like Dr. Laws and all the faithful who have come before us, and who are sitting in the pews today.
 - iv. In our journey, God has told us what God seeks from us, and God has promised never to turn God's back on us
 - v. We get to be here to worship, serve, care, and advocate
4. And so, going back to Micah, our task, for all of us, is what the prophet calls us to and challenges us to. But this is not a test to receive a letter grade, but a constant living into the longstanding heritage of justice, kindness and humble service.