

# “WHAT GOD REQUIRES”

January 22, 2023  
King City United Church  
Padre Rev. Andrew K. Lee

## **Prayer for Illumination**

Holy God, your blessings are abundant, and your wisdom exceeds our grasp. Fill us with your Spirit as we hear your word this day that we may be justice seekers and peacemakers, sharing your life among those who are forgotten, weak, or persecuted, and revealing to all your glory. **Amen.**

## **Scripture Readings**

### **Micah 6:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> Hear what the LORD says:

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

<sup>2</sup> Hear, you mountains, the case of the LORD,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth,  
for the LORD has a case against his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.

<sup>3</sup> “O my people, what have I done to you?  
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup> For I brought you up from the land of Egypt  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery,  
and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup> O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,  
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”

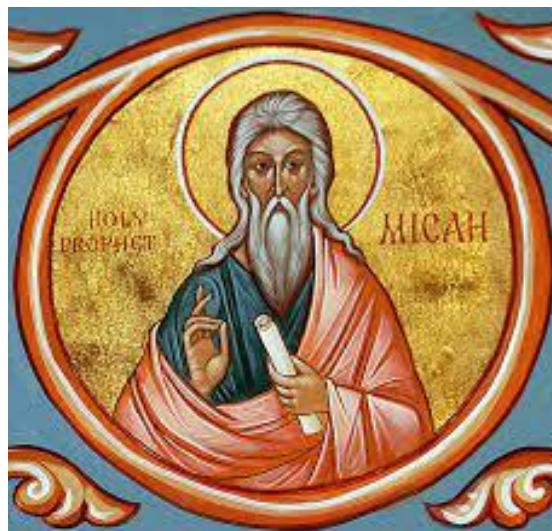
<sup>6</sup> “With what shall I come before the LORD  
and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

<sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

<sup>8</sup> 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?

## <Children's Time>

Good morning my friends! Today I'd like to introduce one of the Bible characters named Micah. He had been active about 700 years before Jesus was born. At the moment, the faith of God was revived, so a lot of people gathered in temples and worshipped God. Temples were literally crowded. What a good mood they enjoyed! People gathered, enjoyed, celebrated, and gave a lot of offering to temples. Everything in the temple looked great and in shape.



However, Micah, a sincere prophet of God, didn't feel the same. Micah thought people were losing very important things about God and faith. Actually, people were gradually forgetting their true saviour, God. They only focused on their gathering with fun and joy. You know, fun and joy are important, but the kingdom of God is not just for fun and joy. Micah didn't like it. So he spoke aloud to people: "Hello people! Remember what God has done for us. God saved you from Egypt and blessed you to have a good life. You forget everything! God is telling you!

"Do justice; love kindness; and walk humbly with your God!" It was not a new word. They all knew that because all are from the Bible. People talked back. "It is easy to say but not so easy to do!" Yes, it really seems not so easy. But now, I will tell you a hint, and that hint will make you easier! Listen carefully.

“Do justice; love kindness; and walk humbly with your God!”

It’s like trail walking with your parents. If you are going to a trail with your parents, you listen to your parents’ directions. “Hey, Sean! That is the wrong way! Here! Turn right! That is the right path!” Walking in the right direction: That is just right.

Love? Love is easy peasy: You love your parents because they gave you life and take care of you. So you love your parents. That’s so natural. That natural warmhearted state is love. I know you love your parents.

Now, on the trail, you walk with your parents. You don’t go too fast or far, you don’t go too slow, but you walk with your parents side by side. That is to walk together.

Now in the trail walking story, let’s put in God instead of your parents. God teaches the right way in your life; that is justice. God loves you and you love God; that is love kindness. God is walking with you in your life journey, so you are walking hand in hand, side by side.

All done! That’s what God wants! They are not that hard, right? Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Okay?  
Before you go, let’s sing a new song. I’ll sing the whole song and teach you line by line. You can find the lyrics in the bulletin.

**Hymn: “Three Things I Promise”**

**MV176 v.1**

**Three things I promise, Holy God,  
in age and youth, in life and death:  
to bless your Name, and cling to Christ,  
and listen for the Spirit’s breath.**

## <Reflection>

A few weeks ago, my second daughter, Erim, pushed my wife and me to watch a movie together in a local theatre. It was a 3-hour-long movie, Avatar 2, directed by James Cameron. It was a cold, wet Thursday night, and the ticket she purchased was for the last session of the last day of the movie. You know, I had my own things to do, and 3 hours of dedication is



not easy. Imagine if I make this Sunday worship service for 3 hours; I will be confronted against the highest level of congregational resistance. Right? Anyways, Jenny and I somewhat hesitated for a moment but soon decided to join Erim to share *her* joy.

The movie was not bad. Actually, it was great. You may know that the main storyline is that humans invade green lands where Na'vi who are tall and blue creatures live to exploit natural resources, and the clan and nature are fighting against the human invasion. The conclusion is clear: The Na'vi win, and wicked humans are defeated. Avatar 2 also followed a similar storyline, adding peace and reconciliation and some family secrets, like the "Now you know that I'm your father" cliché in the Star Wars series.

Actually, as a church minister, I am saving my time to watch movies because movies may represent contemporary trends, lifestyles, and ways of thinking. Then the points of Avatar 2? The movie accentuates the right relationship between humans and nonhumans, emphasizing the ecological values of symbiosis and balanced life. Yes, bearing ecological sensitivity is a

must for modern industries, corporations, and individuals. Then can we, churches, read the Bible from this ecological point of view?

We read the Book of Micah. He is one of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament. We name them "minor" prophets because they write relatively less than other "major" prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Micah was active with Hosea, Isaiah, and Amos. His words are short but powerful. Particularly in chapter 6 we read so many well-known verses, known as the "golden text of the Old Testament."

"what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice and to love kindness  
and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

You've heard this before. These three themes, justice, love and humbleness, are not prophet Micah's unique claims. We can read about them everywhere in the Bible. Moses writes;

<sup>12</sup> "So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments of the LORD and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. (Deut.10:12-13)

And Micah simplifies Moses' words: to do justice, to love, and to walk humbly. These three things are always true in the Bible so preaching these values became a Christian tradition. Augustine, a church father, writes his commentary that "the love of God, of neighbour, and the offering of self in

loving service to one another are far superior to any other sacrifice or burnt offering.” His explanation or repetition of the Word of God is still valid in our times because it is valuable teaching that is true all the time.

However, according to the passing of time and the requirements of modern society, we reinterpret it or add some contemporary ingredients to it. What if we read this text in the midst of our context, our context of the rise of earthly ecological sustainability?

The traditional interpretation of Micah is about the relationship between God and humans. Now, what if we invite the third factor of earth or nature? Is it possible to make nature one of the factors when it comes to the relationship with God? What do you think? Is it natural and possible to invite *nature* into the divine redemption story? You might hesitate because traditionally, we have interpreted that the redemption is only about saving our soul that gives eternal life. Furthermore, Jesus didn't teach about any salvation of nature. However, while delivering Jesus' teaching and Jewish tradition to people, Apostle Paul confirms that nature is another important factor in the divine salvation. He writes,

“the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”  
(Romans 8:21)

Yes, you heard right. Like humans, the children of God, nonhuman nature is also to be saved and to join the divine glory. We need a new perspective; we need a new song; we need new theology in accordance with our contexts and situations.

With the ecotheological lens, how do we read “to do justice,” “to love kindness,” and “to walk humbly”? To do justice is the state of *just right*. This is like the feeling of Goldilocks in the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Justice is the state of just right. Not too much, not too little, but a just-right state. It’s the state of fairness and balance. It is applied not only to our society but also to our relationship with nature. If our usages of natural resources are destructive and irreversible, that’s too much. We need to balance for sustainability, meaning, justice, a just-right state.

To love kindness also supports the idea of justice in the relationship with nature. We must use natural resources for our living and consumption but, at the same time, we must kindly care for nature that God has created. Natural resources are not our asset but God’s, and it is our responsibility to use in a sustainable way and to care for nature.

To walk humbly is about our intentional efforts in our life. We, Christians, pursue a humble life and the lifestyle of it because we, humans, are mortal creatures and are not the immortal creator. Therefore, by intentionally pursuing a humble life, we may walk with God, balancing harmonious status.

To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly are to be exercised at both our individual level and communal level. Christian churches are encouraged to pulsate the ecotheological sense in the human and nonhuman world.

Ecologically speaking, the state of nature is natural. Earth has its own balance through winds, currents, clouds, rains, magnetic fields, gravity and the acceleration of gravity. However, when human activities are blocking this

natural state, humans need to fix our activities and intentionally change the direction towards a harmonious just-right status. And this huge agenda is not just for their story but for our story. Industrial development unknowingly exploited natural resources. Western lifestyle mistakenly over-consumes. As we've heard from scientists, we need seven earths if the people in China lived like North Americans.

God's words are perpetual, but renewals of the interpretation are always needed. And it is the right time for Christians to reflect on a new recognition of justice, love and humbleness. Please keep these three words in your deep heart, and whenever you are unaware, bring them out from your heart and take the standards of your faithful life.

Pondering the words of God, let us pray silently.



<Peaceable Kingdom; Edward Hicks, 1834, oil paint>