

Overview: Justice, Mercy & Humility (Micah 6:1 – 8 & Matthew 18:23 - 35)

Jesus once told a story about a servant who was unable to repay his king a large debt. Therefore the king ordered that all this man had (including his family) be sold to help repay the debt. But when the man fell on his knees and begged for mercy the king took pity on him, cancelled his entire debt and let him go free. As soon as this servant left the king's presence he met a fellow servant who owed him a relatively minor debt. But when this poor man was unable to repay him, the first servant began to choke his fellow servant, demanding to be repaid in full. Although the second servant begged him, the first servant showed no pity and had him thrown into prison. When the king heard this he was furious. He called the first servant before him, saying, *'You wicked servant! I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'* (Matthew 18:21 – 35)

About 700 years before Jesus told this parable God sent a similar message to Israel through the prophet Micah. Micah reminded Israel that God had heard their cries while they were slaves in Egypt. God took pity on them -- redeeming them from their bondage and establishing them in their own land (already overflowing with milk and honey). Therefore God told Micah that he had these charges against Israel's greedy and heartless ruling class,

2:2 They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud people of their homes, they rob them of their inheritance...2:9 You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever. (Micah 2:2, 9)

Micah went on to say,

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.

Do you see the similarities between Jesus' parable and Micah's prophecy?

Our God who has shown us grace and mercy wants us to act this way toward one another. Ironically, in both Micah's day and in Christ's, Israel continued its religious observances. But God said that these religious shows were utterly missing the mark. What God wanted from his people was justice, mercy and humility. Micah 6:8 proclaims,

"He has shown all you people 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." (Also see Psalm 51:16 – 17 and James 1:27)

Christians are a people that have been saved by grace. But this grace came at great cost to God – literally at the cost of his only son (see Micah 6:7b). It would be an insult to take out our cheque books and try to repay God for sacrificing Jesus on our behalf (that is, to try to earn our salvation by our religion or good works). Instead, God desires that our love and mercy should flow naturally out of humble appreciation for what God has done for us. As God has loved us, so we should love one another. As he has been gracious to us, so we should show grace and mercy to others.

Study: Justice, Mercy and Humility (Micah 6:1 – 8 and Matthew 18:23 - 35)

1. Read Micah 6:1 – 5, 9 - 12. What is God's case against the people of Israel?
2. According to Micah 6:6 – 7, how were the people trying to please and appease God?
3. According to Micah 6:8, what does God actually require of his people?
4. Consider the cost of salvation (Micah 6:7). Can we repay God for our salvation? Explain. (See David's confession in Psalm 51:16 – 19)
5. What should be our motivation for loving God and one another?
6. What does it mean to walk humbly with God?
7. Consider your response to God and others based on this study.