The Old Testament text that we read earlier took us back to about 700 years before Christ, the people of Israel were in the midst of a revival. The temples were packed. Politically and economically, things on surface appeared to be going well among the people, showing signs of peace, prosperity and celebrated with many blessings. However, not everything was so golden and pleasant. In the midst of all these “blessings”, the prophet Micah sensed that something was not quite right. The people were not as devoted wholeheartedly as they should be. Their faith in God had become more of an event, rituals, or activities, rather than a dedication and commitment of their lives. Their spiritual flame of passion for God was just not quite there.

The prophet was the spiritual mediator between God and the people. It was the prophet’s job to keep people honest and stay on their toes, whether he’s the one who will deliver the good news of the bad news. He must have the courage to tell the truths to the people, even if the people did not want to face the consequences of their sins. Yes, it’s a tough job, but somebody’s got to do it.

The prophet Micah recognized that despite all the superficial and outward signs of prosperity and blessings, the people’s hearts, their desires and motivations to worship God were simply not there. They might appear to be spiritual and devoted, but they were just going through the motion, doing what they were supposed to or as required by the Law with lackadaisical interests. Their devotion and allegiance had gone sour. Some even took a step further by compromising their faith in worshipping other gods and only called upon the true God of Abraham when needed.

Instead of focusing their minds in honoring God and serving God’s people, the people turned their focus upon themselves. They focused on their own needs and demanded God’s blessings upon them only. Their main concerns were “what was it for them, as they horde God’s blessings and keep them to themselves without sharing them with others. But that was not what God had sanctioned nor did God tolerate such compromise of faith. Not only had they putting other gods before the one and only God, they had carried out the sins of injustice and neglected the welfare of others especially those who were less fortunate than they were - those who belong on the fringe of society, the outsiders, the foreigners, the poor, the widows and orphans, the slaves and servants…just to name a few. There’s a problem there! Not all of God’s people were treated fairly and justly.

This was not the first time that the people of Israel had disappointed God or had failed to meet God’s expectation. Time after time, they had forgotten about the covenant that their forefathers had established with God. You would think by now, after all these years, the people would have learned, but that was not the case. How soon had the people forgotten about God’s covenant to them and vice versa? How soon had the people allowed their personal pride sets in, when we think we can do everything our way, and only invite God to concur with our ideas and plans? How fickle had the people’s hearts have become when we turn our allegiance on other gods or other forms of idolatry that often rob us of our genuine relationship with God? How soon have we forgotten?

Through Micah, God despised and pleaded His charges and accusations against the people but the people still did not get it. They claimed their innocence and thought that they could amend their wrongs without honest confession and repentance. “*What more could you want from us? Shall we make more sacrifices to make up our lack of faith? How about 1,000 sheep and the fattest calves of a year old, or dedicate our firstborn? Isn’t that good enough? Will God be pleased with our offering then?”* But God would NOT succumb to such human bribery of material offering and sacrifices. **What God ultimately demands is the total obedience and allegiance of our hearts!** For it was written, the prophet Samuel, ***"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.[[1]](#footnote-1)***

All along, the people of Israel felt that because they were the chosen people of god, as long as they made their sacrifices and burnt offerings, that would keep their obligation and fulfillment within God’s sighting and that God would be pleased. Unfortunately, they have failed to uphold their end of the covenant that is to share God’s blessings with others.

Being righteous before God isn’t just about worshipping “rightly” physically but spiritually, or proclaiming ourselves to be more righteous than others, or differentiating ourselves from those who are less fortunate or not as blessed as we are. But I don’t think that’s what God had in mind when we are called to be the ones who give mercy and make peace with all of God’s people.

“**What does the LORD require of us**?” According to the prophet Micah, **God wants us to do justice** – to be a voice among those who are oppressed, those who are vulnerable, the widows, the orphans, the foreigners, those with special needs, the elderlies, the sick and the poor. It’s about **putting God FIRST, others SECOND and ourselves LAST,** even at the risk of our own personal sacrifice. As Christ commanded us to *"****love one another as he has loved us.*** ***No one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. We are Christ’s friends if we do what Christ commanded us.”[[2]](#footnote-2)***

So this is what **doing justice**, **extending love and kindness**, and **walking humbly with our God** about. We may not be able to solve the systemic avalanche of problems of the world, knowing that we’re all human and have our own limitations and challenges. But what we can do is that, **we can do our parts individually to demonstrate justice, to show kindness, and to exercise humility for others**. This all begins by looking ourselves into the mirror and not anybody else. This may seem like an enormous challenge but ultimately this is all God at work and we’re simply responding to God’s actions and God’s plan. How are we to transform God’s grace into tangible impact in people’s lives. That is God’s challenge for us today.

As one theologian put it so well that ***God desires more than empty words [and promises]. God desires justice that is measure by how well the most vulnerable fare in the community.*[[3]](#footnote-3)**Those who are the least among us and the voices that are often silenced, reflect upon the greatest opportunity for God’s mercy and triumph. The last shall be first and the first shall be last.

Well, let us fast forward to the present time. What does it all mean for us today in 2017? In times like these in a contentious and divided society – the world, the country, the city, the church, and even the family. It is inevitable that we would find ourselves with someone whom may disagree with us….on anything….and that’s OK. Our focus shall be upon what unites us together and not what divides. Our call as Christ’s disciples is to love and embrace one another, especially upon those who are vulnerable to those who are in power and injustice of our society. As Christians today, we have a responsibility to uphold our faith allegiance to God first and foremost, and then to look after our neighbors and then lastly to ourselves.

Our faith in God is being challenged whenever our personal ethics and moral intersect in both our public and private arenas. Our responses to God’s calling may be different but the ultimate goal and motivation remains the same, as we seek to **do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.**

Keep in mind that none of this is possible without the endorsement of God. To “***walk humbly with our God***” means letting God lead us and not limiting God’s potentials as God sees in us. As we also read earlier, the Apostle Paul reminded the early church in Corinth and to us today that ***God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength. God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise and God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.[[4]](#footnote-4)*** We are called to be instruments of God’s grace in this troubling world.

Later on, we will be ordaining and installing new class of officers who have committed their lives and have said YES to their calling from God. We offer our thanksgiving to God for their service and we pray for their humility to serve as they exercise their wisdom and patience to seek justice, to love kindness for others, and to walk humbly with our God.

Perhaps God is inviting us today to raise our prophetic voice like Micah, to stand with our conviction and to do what is right and just within God’s provision, even if it may demand us to take a stand against the power-to-be, and to demonstrate our resilience. It is our call! It is our destiny and it is our future. But whatever we prayerfully desire to do according to God’s will, trust that God would stand firm with us until the end. God would not abandon God’s own.

***If God is for us, who can be against us?[[5]](#footnote-5)***

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *I Samuel 15:22* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *John 15:12-14*  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Conners, Andrew Foster *Feasting on the Word Year A, Volume 1,* P.292 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *I Corinthians 1:25 and 27* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Romans 8:31 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)