

Friends of God: Micah 6:6-8 –

VIDEO: Thoughts on Church Bubble

Last week I challenged you to follow Jesus' model of breaking out of the proverbial church bubble to go after people where they are, to seek them out, and to wait and watch patiently for opportunities to welcome them into the family of God.

I did this by using Jesus' teaching in Luke 15.

There, Jesus' critics condemned Him for His methods. Why? They had codified what they believed supported the letter of the Law rather than the spirit of the Law.

Jesus wasn't dancing to their tune, so they saw Him as someone who lived an unseparated and unholy lifestyle. In reality, even if He had abstained from eating and drinking with sinners, they would have condemned Him. Jesus said explained this in...

Matthew 11:16-19, *"But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like **children** sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, 17 "and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And **you did not dance**; We mourned to you, And you did not lament.' 18 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, **a glutton and a winebibber**, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."*

It is interesting that Jesus even admitted that, unlike John, He ate what sinners ate, and drank what they

drank (alcohol). His critic's exaggerations of Him as a glutton and wino were used to justify their complaints.

I pushed the limits of what many Christians are comfortable with while still making it clear that we needed to make sure we didn't cross the line of being controlled by our flesh rather than the Holy Spirit.

This morning I want to follow up last week's challenge with a caveat. As we go into people's sin sick worlds, God still expects us to be holy as He is Holy.

Our video was right this morning in one respect: The opening words, *"As Christians it is important that we remain HOLY in an UNHOLY WORLD because we have been set apart to do God's work."*

Peter, quoting a directive in Leviticus 11:14 says in,

1 Peter 1:14-19, *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."*

Holiness, what is it and how can I be holy? What does holiness look like? We have some pretty weird ideas.

The cloths I'm wearing this morning – jeans, no tie, and sketchers may seem less than holy to some of you in a place like this. You may be used to robes and priestly attire or even a suit on someone in my office.

So why have I chosen to dress the way I have?

Well, there are **two reasons**.

First, I do not want to send a message by my dress that is contrary to the gospel I preach. You will notice that all the prophets without exception, including John and Jesus, took this approach.

I want people who come to church for the first time understanding that they can come as they are, because that is how we all must come to God.

I can't tell you how many times I have heard people who have been visiting Laurie and I or others, that they would have accepted an invitation to go to church but they didn't have any "*church clothes*" or "*church worthy clothes*."

This is the kind of thinking that flows out of a bad understanding of God or what church was meant to be.

Coming to church in your Sunday best because you think it pleases God is no more Biblical than thinking that by coming to God with your life all cleaned up you will earn His mercy, grace and forgiveness.

No, to receive His mercy you must to come to Him fully aware of your suffering. To receive His grace you must come to Him fully aware of your unworthiness, and to receive His cleansing forgiveness you must come to Him fully aware of your sinful filthiness.

When it comes to God's approval of you, that is all about what we decide to do with what His Son did on our behalf. He looks at our hearts.

What we wear and what we do is always appraised by our heart's motive. Is it to bring attention and glory to God or is it to bring attention and glory to us?

Now, if you dress up for church just because you like to dress up nice, *fine!*

But let me remind you to make sure you can do it without the presupposition that you are earning God's favor – or that others are being disrespectful to God.

If anything, God is more concerned that we do not disrespect Him by being too dressed up.

Keep in mind what 3 New Testament writers said on this subject.

Peter in 1 Peter 3:3–4 (NLT), "*Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or **beautiful clothes**.⁴ You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.*"

Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:9–10 (NLT), "*And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or **expensive clothes**.¹⁰ For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.*"

Though Peter and Paul's concerns are directed specifically to women, there is no reason not to believe they were equally important perspectives for men.

I suppose the fear James had was based on a problem he observed and felt needed recording because of the potential pit fall we are all capable of falling into.

In James 2:1–4 (NLT), he says, *“My dear brothers and sisters,* how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others? ² For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. ³ If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”—well, ⁴ doesn’t this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?”*

Second, the reason I dress they way I do is because I want people to abandon the concept of Sunday morning Christianity.

God is not just a God of Sunday.

God is not just a God of dressing up.

God is not just a God of smiling, shaking hands and saying, “How are you?”

God is not just a God of dropping 10% of your check in the offering.

God wants to be the God of 100% of your heart!

God is the God of every day!

So when it comes to Holiness, and God says, **“Be Holy for I am Holy,” what does God want from us?**

What does He want out of us as we live life in amongst sinners in an unholy world? Not just in church on Sunday, but every day of our life?

I want to read a **Scripture** where someone was struggling with that very question:

How can we be holy?

Micah 6:1–8 (NLT), *“The Lord’s Case against Israel Listen to what the Lord is saying: “Stand up and state your case against me. Let the mountains and hills be called to witness your complaints. ² And now, O mountains, listen to the Lord’s complaint! He has a case against his people. He will bring charges against Israel. ³ “O my people, what have I done to you? What have I done to make you tired of me? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to help you. ⁵ Don’t you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead? And remember your journey from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, when I, the Lord, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness.” ⁶ What can we bring to the Lord? What kind of offerings should we give him? Should we bow before God with offerings of yearling calves? ⁷ Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins? ⁸ No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: **to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.**”*

This last verse is where we will focus today. This is the definition of the holiness God expects from us.

This was written in the days when people sacrificed animals to God. We don’t do that anymore, because Jesus is our once for all sacrifice for sin.

Micah, the author of this Scripture, after examining all these exaggerated possibilities, rejects them.

No matter how hard we might imagine it is to be holy and to please God, when he finally comes up with his answer, it's almost TOO simple.

There are three things that God *“requires of you:”*

I. To Do What is Right (some version: justly)

This word *“justly”* essentially means *“the right thing.”* It comes from the word meaning **“court verdict.”**

The whole passage in Micah is using legal terms. Israel is accusing God of being unrighteous and God calls them to present their evidence in court. In the end He will prove that He has always done right by Israel.

In conclusion, He asks them to demonstrate the same evidence in regards to their own holiness. What He expects from them is that they also ***Do what's right.***

Now, you've got to realize one thing. Doing what's right doesn't earn you God's mercy, grace, or forgiveness.

Isaiah 64:6 (NLT), *“We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind.”*

The sacrificial system was designed to get us in right standing with God and their good works were the expected result of a cleansed and holy people.

That's what Christ's sacrifice does for us.

Without that, nothing we do is ever enough.

Verse 8 is not the plan or path of salvation. God is stating what He wants from those who are already His.

So the question now is, having come to God through Christ, what does a holy life look like?

Let me share 2 other Scriptures with you:

Psalm 119:105 (NLT), *“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.”*

Psalm 119:11 (NLT), *“I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”*

So he's saying, “If I read the Bible, it will guide my path, and help me to know how I can keep from sinning – **how I can do the RIGHT thing.**”

There are times in each of our lives that we have to opportunity to do what is right or what is wrong.

It's six in the morning, the light won't turn green, no one is around, do you run the red light?

You know you said something that was uncaring and hurtful, you know you should go to them and make it right, but do you?

You know that when the cashier gave you the change she gave you \$10 to much, you know you should say something and return it, but do you? God is calling us to what is right.

If we claim to be Christians, He's calling us to do what's right! If we say we know Him while doing what's wrong, our relationship with Him is in question.

Titus 1:16 (NLT), *“Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.”*

When God calls us to act justly how do we respond? Do we say Yes Lord, I will follow you, Yes Lord, you are first in my life, Yes Lord, I'll go where you want me to go and do what you want me to do, and then do we follow through?

The Christian group D.C. Talk said -- “The greatest problem with Christianity today, are people who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and deny Him by their lifestyle, that is what a unbelieving world, simply finds unbelievable.”

God is calling us to be Holy by Acting Justly and doing what is Right!

II. To Love Mercy

When I was younger, kids used to play a game called mercy. You would lock hands with someone and try to bend the other person's hands until they called for mercy.

I'm glad that isn't the way God does it with us!

What does it mean to show mercy? The word that is used here means “loyal love and kindness.”

It means treating people better than they deserve to be treated, even when you don't feel like it.

To have mercy on someone means that you have pity on them or you show them leniency.

In **Matthew 18**, Jesus tells of a King who wanted to settle his accounts, so he called in all the people who owed him money and asked for it back.

One man owed the king 10,000 talents (a lot of money). There was no way the man could ever repay the king, but the king had mercy on his servant and canceled the debt.

The servant then went to his friend who owed him a 100 denarii (not very much money) and asked for his money back, the man said that he couldn't pay it back yet, so he took him by the neck and threw his friend in prison.

Needless to say when the king heard about this he wasn't happy.

If we truly want to be Holy, then we have to love mercy! We have to be willing to forgive our neighbor, and not only forgive them, but do it from our heart!

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

“But I don't ask for justice,” the mother explained. “I plead for mercy.” “But your son does not deserve mercy,” Napoleon replied. “Sir,” the woman cried, “it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for.” “Well, then,” the emperor said, “I will have mercy.” And he spared the woman's son.
(From sermonillustrations.com)

That's mercy – its undeserved kindness.

We all need mercy, and we need to offer it. We are compelled by Christ to offer unconditional acceptance of others, in spite of their faults, idiosyncrasies, sins and shortcomings.

We need to approach people without pre-conceived notions; we should give others the benefit of the doubt, and not let things come in the way of friendship.

And loving mercy means we extend forgiveness. We should ask ourselves: How can I show mercy to others? Who is in need, and how can I help? Who do I need to forgive?

I probably don't have to tell you HOW you can show mercy. You know that situation you're thinking of. . . your kids, your wife, your neighbor, co-worker, schoolmate. . . And like you before a holy God, they don't deserve right treatment.

But if we are going to be HOLY as He is HOLY, expects us to show them mercy even if they do not deserve it.

I'm defiantly glad that's what God does for me.

III. To Walk Humbly With Your God

The last way that I see for us to be Holy, is by WALKING HUMBLY WITH OUR GOD.

The word "humbly" that is used here means, "*lowering yourself.*"

Our basic problem as humans is we put OURSELVES at the center of our lives.

- my job first, even if it means sacrificing family.
- my happiness first, even if it means divorce.
- my pleasure first, even if it means I won't wait until marriage.
- my success first, even if I have to stab someone else in the back.
- my self-esteem first, even if I have to cut someone down with my words.
- my plan for my life first, even if it means ignoring God.

To walk "humbly" with God means I take MYSELF out of 1st place, and put HIM in 1st place.

He's FIRST in all our decisions.

He's FIRST in all our attitudes.

He's FIRST in all our words.

He's FIRST in all our problems.

He's FIRST in our home.

He's FIRST in our money.

"Walking humbly with your God" means:

God's not just the God of your dress-up clothes. He's the God of your day to day clothes, and your work clothes as well!

1 Peter 5:5 (NIV84), "*Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

James 4:10 (NIV84), "*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*"

God will lift you up! But, what does it mean to really humble yourself? If He is asking us to be Holy as He is Holy – He is our best example for any of these things.

With that in mind let's look at the humility of Christ and what it resulted in for Him.

Philippians 2:5–11 (NKJV), *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

In truth, we can never apply everything that Christ was and did completely, but He is our best example. And we can be sure that God will never ask any more of us, than He asked of His own Son. If we humble ourselves He will lift us up, just as He did with His Son..

CONCLUSION

The only way I can see it, is that if we want to be Holy, then we need to be actively pursuing these three things in our daily lives – not just on Sundays!

If sin is left unchecked we are either unable to do right, unable to forgive other's or even seek our own forgiveness because we lack the humility it takes as we walk with our God.

Acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly are the outgrowth of genuine faith.

These things show us what God's people do—not how we become His people. A living faith is seen by a holy behavior.

I hope our neighbors, friends, co-workers can see Christ working in us. I hope they see us doing what is right, loving mercy and walking humbly with our God.

It's been said, *“A Christian is a mind through which Christ thinks; a heart through which Christ loves; a voice through which Christ speaks; a hand through which Christ helps.”*

The great thing about all of this, is that you don't have to take my word for it **Micah 6:8 states**, *“No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: **to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.**”*

How is your walk with God this morning? Are there areas in your life that need to be turned about, then I challenge you to do it today!

Maybe this morning you see the need for Savior who was tempted in every way, yet was without sin, if that applies to you, don't wait make that decision today! No matter where you are or where you've been, remember that you can always reach out and God will reach in!