

- I. You got a problem, Dude – sue me.
 - A. In the 8th century before Jesus, there was a prophet who decried the corruption and the lack of compassion and justice to the poor that was rampant in Judah.
His message was a call to Judah to return to its relationship with God and the things that God requires.
 - B. The prophet's name was Micah, perhaps as a court bailiff in this passage, Micah announces God's complaint against Judah as if they were in a court.
 - C. Micah calls out to the courtroom:
Hear what the Lord says:
Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.
Hear, you mountains, the accusations of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a case against his people, and is lodging a charge against Israel.
The Lord God then said,
"O my people, what have I done to you?
In what have I burdened you?
Answer me!
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.

O my people, remember all that I have done for you that you may know the saving acts of the Lord."

The accused will then guiltily respond,
"With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow down before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
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?"

Then the Judge would reply,
"No, you just don't get it.
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?"

- II. So honestly, in our economic system that is still skewed to transfer wealth from the poor to the rich, where the rich

get richer and the poor get poorer;
do ya think God might be making the
same accusation?

- A. And do you think as a nation we have responded any less lame brained than did the ancient Judeans?
- B. The Judeans response was to go church and say, "Sorry."
And then offer a little burned sacrifice to God.
- C. To which I have to think that God's first thought would be,
"Dude, let me tell you something, you come and make a burned sacrifice of your calves or goats or rams or lambs or whatever and especially your first born, let me tell ya; it's not you making the sacrifice, but rather it's the goat or ram or your first born. They are sacrificing a whole lot more than you are."
But beyond that, Micah makes it pretty clear that the Judeans totally missed the point of God wanted.
- D. As a parent I can't tell you how many times I have had the same torturous frustration that God must have been feeling.

1. So many times you try to correct a child's behavior and scold them and they say they're sorry and do some little penance and then the next week, the next day, the next hour --- they do it again.
2. Raise your hand if you've been there.
3. If you're a parent and you didn't raise your hand – then write a book, get rich, tell us how you did it.

E. It's not the “sorry,” and the little bit of penance we are after, it's a change in behavior.

The same was true for God and the Judeans.

F. God was looking for the Judeans, to stop giving all the breaks to the rich and powerful and quite messing over the poor.

G. But as evidenced by the Judean leaders, some kids never grow up; they just stay greedy and self-centered until finally their corruption brings a collapse to their house of cards, -- no -- their mansions of cards – built on sand to boot.

III. So if God is looking for us to behave as adults, as mature civilized adults, as mature civilized God loving adults,

then what behavior exactly is it that God is after?

A. The first answer to that question comes to us from Jesus.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

B. Now you would think that this would be sufficient, but a lot folks are still confused, so I suggest that you double check your behavior with Micah’s prescription for what God requires of us; namely, “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.

C. Be just, kind and humble.

IV. The reality is that sometimes we may want to love our neighbor and love God by doing what is right; but we’re not really sure how to make that determination.

A. Your first check should be to whether your action is loving.

That is, is it value enhancing?

- B. But if that still leaves things too ambiguous, then there's Micah's double check.
Is your action just?
Is it kind?
Is it done in a way that doesn't necessarily put your interests above the needs and interests of the other person or persons?
Namely, is it done in all humility?
- V. Now there are folks out there who really have absolutely no interest in this check list.
- A. There are folks out there who are only interested in enhancing their own value.
- B. Justice is only defined by what is good for them.
- C. Kindness is only a tool for getting what they want.
- D. And the last thing they want to do is reduce their importance; for any reason.
- E. Such a person may be labeled narcissistic, but narcissism has become so normal now that this year the American Psychiatric Association, took it off of their list of mental diseases.

1. Clearly today there are very popular groups whose rhetoric would go.
“Ask not what you can do for your country; ask what your country can do for you.”
 2. And there are lots of churches that preach,
“Ask not what you can do for God; ask what God can do for you.”
- F. But just because such a person now is considered normal; that still is not what God is calling us to be.
- G. In fact, I believe that such behavior and attitudes may be so normal, that what God is calling us to be is -- abnormal.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

Really?

Can you believe that?

If you do, then --

you've figured out what the Judean leaders could not. AMEN.