

# Discipleship Guide

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## Week 4:



### Justice and Peace

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This week we will reflect on what it means to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with God.

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*"He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God." ~Micah 6:8 (CEB).*

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### PRAYER FOR THE DAY

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Gracious God, we sing praises to your holy name. O how excellent is your name in all the earth. God thank you for your presence, for your unfailing love, for your graciousness, and for the lessons that we continue to learn from you. Thank you for being here with us this morning, meeting each of us where we are. We thank you for being the voice of reason in our lives, guiding our paths along the way. God, we ask that you will continue to move in such a way. We are still so desperate for your wisdom and direction.

Many of us have come this morning, with joy in our hearts, in celebration of the amazing things that you have done in our lives. But many of us have also come with heavy hearts, with grief, doubt, and anxiety. God we ask that you would meet each of us at our deepest needs. We are convinced Lord that despite what we might be struggling with in this moment, that you are with us, and you will see us through. Touch us Lord, with your healing hand, with your assuring, loving hand, and fill us with your peace that surpasses all understanding.

God forgive us for the moments when we have fallen short of your glory, for the moments when we have refused to see your face, when we have denied you and your will for our lives. Shed your grace upon us Lord. Give us clean and perfect hearts and help us to hold ourselves accountable for the ways in which we have fallen short.

We ask that you would touch our nation and our leaders. Where there is division, we ask that you bring peace and harmony, bring compassion, and understanding. We ask that you would touch our communities that so desperately need you. Guide us to be your hands and feet, give us the wisdom and the resources to live into our purpose as Jesus followers. Move in us, in a mighty way, so that we can be your vessels, your partners, glorifying you in all that we do.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen

NEED PRAYER?

Text or call  
(629) 300-6090



SERMON: WEEK 4: JUSTICE AND PEACE

A DEEPER DIVE: UNDERSTANDING JUSTICE

SERMON NOTES:

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# SERMON

*Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley*

The book of Micah is one of the twelve Minor Prophets in the Old Testament of the Bible. It is attributed to the prophet Micah, who lived during the latter half of the 8th century BCE. The book contains a collection of prophecies and messages delivered by Micah to the people of Judah, specifically to the city of Jerusalem, during a time of social, political, and religious upheaval. Micah's ministry took place during a period of significant turmoil and change in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

In the 8th century BCE, the mighty Assyrian Empire was expanding and exerting pressure on various nations in the region, including the northern Kingdom of Israel. Micah's prophecies were given in this context of international turmoil and the looming threat of Assyrian invasion. The political landscape was characterized by the changing allegiances and alliances of Judah with various regional powers in an attempt to secure protection against the Assyrian threat.

This often led to unfaithfulness to God's commands and a reliance on human strategies instead of trusting in God.

The religious practices of the people had also deviated from the true worship of Yahweh. Idolatry and syncretism (mixing of various religious beliefs) were prevalent, and the religious leaders often failed to uphold the moral and ethical standards expected by God.

The society of Judah during Micah's time was marked by social inequalities, corruption, and oppression of the poor by the rich and powerful. The wealthy elites were exploiting the vulnerable, and this social injustice was deep-seated.

Today's passage, Micah 6 captures Micah's core message of justice, humility, and sincere devotion to God. In this passage, the people are confronted with their misguided understanding of worship. They seem to believe that performing elaborate sacrifices and rituals is sufficient to appease God, even while their behavior contradicts the principles of justice and righteousness.

Micah's response, often paraphrased as follows, emphasizes the heart of what God truly desires: He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.

Micah's message rebukes the people's external religious practices as they did not lead to transformation in their lives. The call for justice, mercy, and humility aligns with God's timeless desire for a genuine relationship with His people marked by righteous living and a heart that reflects God's character.

When delving into the context behind Micah's prophetic words, one might realize that not much has changed in a few thousand years. Too many of us who call ourselves Christians have failed to experience real transformation with God. Too many of us have spent our lives in the church, going through the motions, practicing rituals out of habit that don't mean much to us at the end of the day. Too many of us have spent our lives sitting in pulpits without having ever made the choice to truly follow Jesus. Too many of us have yet to make Jesus our choice.



Just as in Micah's time, there can be a tendency to focus on outward displays of religiosity without genuine heart transformation. In our society, there are instances where people engage in religious rituals or expressions without letting those practices translate into meaningful moral and ethical behavior. This can manifest as hypocrisy or a disconnect between professed faith and actions.

When it comes to the practice of faith, the practice of following Jesus, many are simply out of touch because our hearts don't always inform our practice. We don't always see that there is heart work necessary when doing life with God. And the thing is, we could spend our lives going through the motions, convincing other people that our hearts are in the right place, but we'll never be able to convince God. God always knows what's in our hearts. That is the root of God's concern that the prophet addresses in this passage. God knew that their hearts weren't in the right place and a simple offering wasn't going to fix that. God desires more than ritualistic offerings. God values a heart transformed by justice and love.

Imagine a neglected garden in the heart of a city. For years, it lay untouched, overrun by weeds, and forgotten by the bustling world around it. But then, a group of volunteers, moved by a shared passion for nature and community, decided to transform this neglected space into a thriving urban oasis.

As they began their work, they encountered all sorts of challenges. The soil was compacted, and the weeds seemed relentless. Yet, with determination, they started to dig, nourish the soil, and carefully plant a variety of flowers, shrubs, and trees. They watered, they weeded, and they patiently waited for signs of life.

Months passed, and gradually, the garden began to change. The once barren ground burst forth with vibrant colors and sweet fragrances. People passing by would stop to admire the beauty that had emerged from the hands of those dedicated volunteers. What was once an eyesore had become a place of inspiration and tranquility—a true testament to the transformative power of care and dedication.

In a similar way, God values a heart transformed by justice and love. Just as those volunteers transformed the neglected garden, God desires to transform our hearts from places of neglect and self-centeredness into beautiful gardens of justice and love. When we allow God's love to work in us, we begin to uproot the weeds of selfishness, injustice, and indifference. We dig deep into the soil of compassion, empathy, and mercy.

As we water our hearts with the teachings of Christ and the wisdom of Scripture, we see the shoots of justice and love begin to sprout. We take action to correct societal wrongs, to stand up for the marginalized, and to care for the less fortunate. Our transformed hearts become sources of inspiration and healing in the world around us, drawing others to the beauty of God's transformative work within us.

Just like that garden, the process isn't always easy. We encounter challenges and setbacks along the way. But just as the volunteers didn't give up, we persevere with God's help, knowing that the results are worth it. Our transformed hearts become a living testimony to the power of God's love to bring about lasting change in our lives and in the lives of those we touch.

Micah's emphasis on acting justly and loving mercy speaks to the issue of social justice and inequality. Whether we want to see them or not, whether we want to name them or not, our society struggles with various forms of social injustice,

including racial disparities, economic inequality, unequal access to education and healthcare, and systemic discrimination. Micah's words align directly with the teachings of Jesus and his actions that consistently addressed social injustice and inequality.

Jesus often associated with those who were considered social outcasts and marginalized by society. He ate with tax collectors, sinners, and other socially stigmatized individuals, challenging the norms of his time and showing that everyone had value in God's eyes. Jesus used parables to teach about the Kingdom of God and to challenge societal attitudes. Parables like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son emphasized the importance of compassion, mercy, and inclusivity. These stories challenged prejudices and highlighted the need to care for others regardless of their social standing.

Jesus' miracles often involved healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, and freeing people from physical and spiritual oppression. These actions demonstrated his compassion for those who were suffering and his desire to restore their dignity. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus taught about a higher standard of righteousness that went beyond mere external actions. He emphasized qualities such as humility, mercy, and peacemaking, which were countercultural and aimed at fostering a just and equitable society.

Jesus' miracles of feeding the multitudes (e.g., the feeding of the 5,000) demonstrated his concern for the physical well-being of people. These acts of abundance underscored his care for those in need and his ability to provide for them.

The call to "embrace faithful love" underscores the importance of showing compassion and kindness to others. Micah calls us to see all the people. He calls us to see all people as children of God, as made in the image of God. He calls us to value all people with dignity and partner with God in upholding that dignity. Embracing faithful love is about showing up for others when it may not be easy. It's about living and serving as God's light for those who desperately need to feel God's light. Embracing faithful love is about our willingness to show up in the world faithfully with tenderness especially when we find ourselves surrounded by cruelty.

Micah addresses hubris and humility. Walking humbly with God involves recognizing our limitations and not allowing pride or arrogance to guide our actions. Today, the pursuit of individualism, materialism, and an excessive focus on leveraging power can lead to a lack of humility. Micah encourages a perspective that acknowledges our reliance on God and our interconnectedness with others. I've seen so many people in our community who seek to make others feel so small so that they can feel big but when we know who are in Christ and whose we are, we find personal security. There is human temptation to get ahead, to have more advantages than others, to be first all the time but Jesus once said that the first will be last and the last shall be first. The prophet reminds us to humble ourselves, to never see ourselves as bigger or better than others AND let us remember that only God is sovereign, and God doesn't need our help to reign supreme.

"The Lord has already shown you what is good, what he requires from you: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

The good news is that what God requires of us are not distant or unrealistic standards. Instead, they provide a clear roadmap for living a meaningful and purposeful life. We can find comfort in knowing that in a world filled with

complexities, uncertainties, and distractions, God's desires for us are clear. The ideals of Micah 6 align perfectly with Matthew 22 when Jesus said love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love God with all your heart, mind, and soul.

The same God who spoke through Micah's prophetic voice speaks to us today. Our Lord guides us in the midst of challenges and offers us a way to navigate the complexities of our lives. As we strive to live justly, embrace love, and walk humbly with God, we can find fulfillment and purpose in our journey of faith. God's expectations invite us to experience the abundant life that God seeks to offer us." To God be the glory

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

# A DEEPER DIVE

*Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley*

Often, while scrolling through social media, I notice people within the Christian community mis-characterizing justice work, speaking against it. I find this baffling as themes of justice are deeply embedded in scripture. How did we get here? How on earth did a word like “justice” become triggering and controversial?

This issue is tremendously complex, but I'll offer one explanation here. One issue involves our view of the injustices taking place in our society. Some view these injustices as issues we can't personally resolve. Others may not feel responsible to find solutions if they don't feel complicit in perpetuating those injustices. Systemic racism is a good example of this.

Our congregations are not on the same page about the reality of racism and how racism rears itself in our society. For those willing to tell the truth about racism in our society, they may not be on the same page about what the church's response should be. Many see racism as a personal issue and not a systemic one. Seeking justice in places where systemic racism has ensued makes many uncomfortable because they don't understand it and they don't believe there is a need for it today. Some believe the untruth that we now live in a meritocracy, where all share the same privileges and opportunities to thrive in our society.

In verse 8 of Micah 6, the prophet calls us to actively engage in practices that promote fairness, equity, and righteousness in society. He encourages believers to stand against oppression, to challenge unjust systems, and to ensure that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. We are not honoring our call to continue in the work of the kingdom when we fail to act in such a way. Jesus called us to love our neighbors, which would include standing for our neighbors when they are not able to stand and speaking for our neighbors when society has stripped them of their voices.

## QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:

- In your view, why is the concept of justice triggering? Why does this word make some people uncomfortable?
- How could we help others to un-learn mischaracterizations of justice?
- What would it take for more faith communities to finally pursue the work of justice?
- Name the injustices that we experience in our society today. What would it look like for your community to be a source of healing and restoration?



# Sermon Notes

## Worship Guide for Young Kids

TODAY WE...

Sang: \_\_\_\_\_

Prayed About: \_\_\_\_\_

Celebrated: \_\_\_\_\_

Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Gave: \_\_\_\_\_

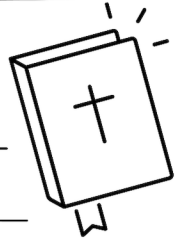
Shared About: \_\_\_\_\_

THE BIBLE PASSAGE TODAY IS...

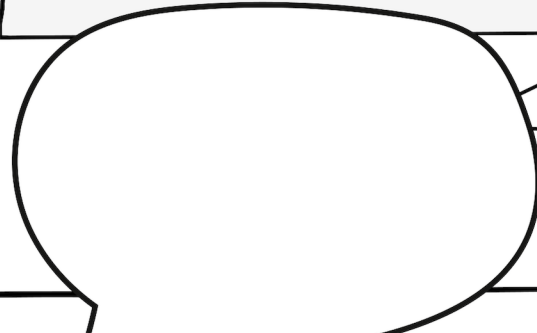
**Book:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Verse:** \_\_\_\_\_



THE SPEAKER SAID...



GOD WANTS ME TO...

I WAS CONFUSED  
WHEN...

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