

“The To Do List: Justice” (draft)

Micah 6:1-8

January 8, 2016

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Well, back to regular worship. For the last 2 weeks, Christmas Day and New Year's Day we have had 1 service. Now back to our regular worship. Hold it just one 2017 minute. I don't want regular worship. I want worship that connects. I want worship that inspires. I want worship that convicts. I want worship that helps us go deeper. I don't want a worship service to endure. I don't want a worship service to show God, “Hey I showed up!” I don't want a worship service that is routine and regular. I want a worship service where God is present, God is alive, and God is at work. So my prayer is that we do not have any regular worship services this year.

Okay...I got that out of my system. It's a New Year and a lot “to do.” In fact we could easily come up with a “To Do List” for 2017. **(IMAGE)** At church we sometimes, and maybe rightfully so, feel like it's a lot of “don't do's.” Churches seems to have “don't do lists.” Don't do this, don't do that...No, no, no, no.

On summer vacation in July Sarah and I were in Tennessee. We were on a back road and wanted to stop for a soda. As I was getting in the car to leave this little gas station/convenient store I couldn't help but take a picture of the front of the store. The signage was killing me. **(IMAGE)**

“No soliciting allowed! \*Of any kind for any reason\* \*Violators will be banned permanently from the property.

NO NO NO NO!! Loitering, waiting, hanging out, resting, “taking a break”, or whatever you want to call it!!! You will be asked to leave one time only. Then the police will be called!!!”

Wow---talk about a “don't do list.” But then what got me was the rest of the front of the store. I cropped these signs first to show you the signs. Let me show you a shot of the front windows of the store and see if you find what I find, in my weird type of humor, is something hilarious. Here is the entire front windows. **(IMAGE)** After all those NO NO NO NO's they have the sign that says, “Thanks for shopping here!”

I feel like at church we hear the “don't do this,” “stop that,” “no, no, no.”...oh and by the way thanks for worshipping here.

Beloved we have Good News to proclaim. Good news of a great joy. I love Christmas!!!! Hold it...Christmas is over....No it's not....it's right here in my heart!!!!

So what are we to do as follower of Jesus this year? Let's have a “to do list this year.” However I know that many of you are procrastinators and have a hard time getting things started and starting that “to do list.” So I wanted to share with you the list of “The Top Ten Reasons I Procrastinate.” **(Image)**

Oh, friends---just do it.

Scripture clearly gives us a “To Do List” and it only has 3 items. **(Image of logo with all 3 listed.)** Today we will look at the first one. But we will need to look at the Biblical context. By the way let me throw this out here at the New Year. I want to encourage you to bring your Bible with you to church. Yes we will have scripture on the screen. Yes there will be Bibles in the pews in front of you. But when you bring your own you can write notes in it, as well as on the note section in the bulletin. And also you have brought your Bible to take with you to small group Bible study after service....just sayin’.

So our scripture is from the Old Testament prophet Micah and the book he has written. Micah chapter 6. **VERSE 1: Hear what the Lord says:**

Notice not what I say, not what the political pundits say, not what the media says,...hear---not what your bias, background and prejudice say, but hear what the Lord says.

The Lord is presenting the indictment. For verse 2 says “the Lord has an indictment against his people...” It seems like the people of Israel feel wronged. For God says, **VERSE 3: “O my people, what have I done to you?”** Have you perhaps ever felt that way? God why have You done that to me? I’ve been trying Lord. Why Lord?” God goes on in verse 3 and says, **VERSE 3, How have I wearied you?”** Well, Lord, you didn’t answer my prayer quick enough. In fact you didn’t answer it the way I wanted you to. God so many other people don’t have near the problems I do. God why do some get away with things and I get in trouble for the smallest things. Oh God....I thought it was going to be different. God why don’t you....and then we proceed to give the God of the universe who created us advice. I feel like yelling Stop!!!! **(Image)** Would you like some cheese with your Whine?

Remember where you came from. Remember who you were. God is saying in this passage, “O people I brought you up from the land of Egypt. I redeemed you from the house of slavery. I sent you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. The following verse, **VERSE 5** had me do a little Bible searching.

**O my people, remember what Balak King of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord.”**

Here’s a brief version of the story of Balak and Balaam. Balak, King of Moab feared the Israelites and hired Balaam to curse Israel before they entered Canaan. This is found in the book of Numbers chapters 22-24. Balaam does not do what Balak asks. In fact **Numbers 23:11 And Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies and behold you have nothing but bless them.”**

**Verse 12: And he (Balaam) answered and said, “Must I not take care to speak what the Lord puts in my mouth?”**

Dag burn it....don’t you hate it when your enemies get blessed rather than cursed.

Balak tries again to get Balaam to curse the Israelites. However for a second time Balaam blesses them. **Numbers 23:25 Balak said to Balaam, “Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all.”**

Just leave them be. For goodness sake don't bless those enemies. However **Numbers 23:26 But Balaam answered Balak, “Did I not tell you, “All the Lord says, that I must do.”**

And then there is a third time and now Balak is really angry and says to Balaam. **Numbers 24:12 I called you to curse my enemies and behold you have blessed them these three times.”**

And again Balaam replies and explains, **Numbers 24:12 “What the Lord speaks, that will I speak.”**

The rest of the verse in Micah talks about Shittim (sheh-teem) and Gilgal. God tells them to remember what happened from Shittim to Gilgal. Know the righteous acts of the Lord. At Shittim the covenant was broken (Numbers 25:1-9). At Gilgal the covenant was renewed. (Joshua 5). Gilgal is similar to the Hebrew verb “galal” which means to roll. And also similar to noun “galgal” which means wheel. Gilgal where the past of Egypt was “rolled away.” God is always in the redeeming business.

With that history let's go back to our scripture text in Micah. **Micah 6:8 With what shall I come before the Lord....”**

This question is one for every age and from every age of time. Let me paraphrase what the response is. The people realize that now they are in covenant with God, they have been redeemed, they have rolled away the repression and past of Egypt...now God what do you want us to do?

So they make some suggestions. How about I: bow before God. Now that sounds good. Doesn't it? xxxxx In fact they say I'll come before God with burnt offerings. Or maybe it will please the Lord if I give Him a thousand rams....ore even 10,000 of rivers of oil. More, more, more...that's what I'll give. In fact if you want me to I will give my firstborn.

Even here in the Old Testament we see a bounty of grace. A sacrifice is not an entry fee. We can't earn God's favor...we already have it. So then we have the key verse of Micah 6:8 (**image with all 3 of the To Do's**) “He has told you, O man, 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?”

So first thing on the To Do List: Justice. Justice is fulfilling mutual obligations consistent with God's moral law. The Hebrew word for justice is mishpat (mish-paw). It is used 200 times in the Old Testament. It means making right decisions according to God's commands. In the English Standard Version study notes it says this: Justice “part of a government, a fair and just use of power and proper functioning of a fair judicial system, especially to protect the weak from the strong.”

For individuals “Justice” involves honest and fair business dealings and faithfulness to keep ones word as well as not taking advantage of poor or those with less power or protection.

First on the To Do List is Justice. Justice to those in poverty, justice concerning racism, justice with sexism, justice and abuse, justice with those hungry, justice with regard to Human trafficking.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King in his “I Have a Dream Speech” in 1963 said “No, no, we are not satisfied and will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

Are we satisfied....do we have that type of justice? xxxxx In fact Dr. King said this in 1963, but he was quoting the prophet Amos from the Old Testament who said the same thing. (Amos 5:2) “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” The prophet Amos said that around 760 B.C.

Oh but we say, “Well some people deserve what that get. In fact Exodus 21:24 says, “An eye for an eye.” Yes, we may say that is justice. But Gandhi said (IMAGE) “An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.”

Yes, the Old Testament did say that...but let's look at the red letters of Jesus and see what He said.

**Matthew 5:38-42**The Message (MSG) <sup>38-42</sup> “Here’s another old saying that deserves a second look: ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.’ Is that going to get us anywhere? Here’s what I propose: ‘Don’t hit back at all.’ If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.”

Oh my. Love your enemies. Love those different than you. Love those who may be weaker. Love All! .....Hmmm...Love God! Love All!! That's different than what I thought justice was.

Timothy Keller puts it this way: “ If you are trying to live a life in accordance with the Bible, the concept and call to justice are inescapable. We do justice when we give all human beings their due as creations of God. Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable.

*Generous Justice by Timothy Keller, Riverhead Books a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc.*

Back in 1960 DC Comics came up with a group called The Justice League (IMAGE) Comics are still being made. Many youth and young adults love graphic novels and the Justice League are published in that form as well as a new movie coming out in November of this year starring Ben Affleck.

Oh to be like the Justice League. Like Superman--- Faster than a speeding bullet! More powerful than a locomotive! Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound! To be like Batman and have a Batmobile. To be like Wonder Woman and have superhuman powers. To be like The Flash and

have such speed, to be like Green Lantern and have a ring that gave me power, or Aquaman where I have enhanced breathing underwater, or even like Martian Manhunter who has superhuman strength, invisibility and shape-shifting. Ah, then we could bring Justice. But note what a description of The Justice League says on Wikipedia: “While the superheroes individually defeated most of the invaders, the heroes fell prey to a single competitor's attack; only by working together were they able to defeat the competitor.”

Only by working together were they able to defeat the competitor! Beloved it is only together that we can have a part of The Justice League and defeat the injustices of this world. Not individually, but together.

As our Missions Director Jamie Hammond had a letter shared last week, I repeated that letter in the e-mail Direct from Dave.....PHUMC together----is doing justice---

Feeding the homeless on Saturdays at Metropolitan Ministries in Pasco on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Saturday. Each and every month. Together you provided 300 Back Packs for school for children in need. PHUC feeds 165 children each week through the Pack a Sack program between 2 public schools. We had a Reindeer Run again this year that brought proceeds and awareness to Human Trafficking, 90 families were adopted at Christmas with toys and food from FEAST, Some families were paired with sponsoring families. And now I quote Jamie our Missions Director, “collected about a zillion toys during our toy drive.” And yes Operation Christmas Child had us together send over 3600 shoeboxes around the world not only with toys and care products, but also the Gospel message. Soon we begin another Habitat for Humanity Faith build in the area and will be doing some disaster relief work in Pasco County. Yes, by working together just like the Justice League we can promote justice and help defeat injustice.

But individually....how are we doing....how can we encounter injustices. Well as the choir sang...I’m counting on God, yes, I’m counting on, I’m counting on, I’m counting on God....and you know what I believe He’s counting on you!

We began with Micah 6:1 that said “Hear what the Lord says.” And we end this passage with “This is what the Lord requires of you.” Do Justice.

Dr. Howard Thurman was an influential author, philosopher, theologian, educator and civil rights leader. He was Dean of Theology and the chapels at Howard University and Boston University for more than two decades, wrote 20 books. He wrote a poem, The Work of Christmas. I have used it in previous years....but oh to hear it again in light of the Requirement, God says, to do justice.

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,

When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers,  
To make music in the heart.

The To Do List. #1: To Do Justice