



Leigh McLeroy is struggling honestly here with right and wrong, and justice and mercy.

The very human response to injustice is anger. That response is in itself a powerful apologetic for the existence of a high and holy standard of righteousness not our own. Because we are made in the image of God, we feel in our bones when something is wrong...and we want things to be made right.

I want justice in matters large and small. I want the "wrong to fail and right prevail," as Longfellow wrote. But truth be told, I want this most when I believe that I am right, not when I am wrong. I'm a justice girl...until I realize I am in need of mercy. Then I'm a mercy girl. And I'm pretty sure I'm not alone in these preferences.

The peril in my personal passion for justice rises when I forget mercy, and pridefully insist that I know better than God what righteousness demands in any given situation. Elisabeth Elliot once said, "God is God. I dethrone him in my heart when I demand he act in ways that satisfy my idea of justice." (This thought wounds me more than a little; I've done some serious "dethroning" in my time.)

God requires me to act justly, according to his holy standard of righteousness. But the prophet Micah says he requires not only this. He would have me marry my just actions with a love of God's mercy--his hesed, his loving faithfulness--adding to that a humility that acknowledges my own sin, my own very human limitations, my own willful gone-wrongness.

"Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution," said Thomas Aquinas, "[and] justice without mercy is cruelty." I know the balance between these two imperatives is humanly impossible to maintain for long. And that's where humility comes in. I must rely on the surety of God's ultimate justice, and lean just as heavily on his ample mercy--demonstrated in the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for sinners like me.

"Act justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly." Easy to say. Short and pithy enough to display on a mug or a t-shirt, a poster or tattoo. Much more challenging to live out in any and every situation with real consistency...and with joy. Father, help me to better combine these three, in Your holy name. Amen.

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8, NIV)