

Every heart, every head, every hand for every hurt

I've been praying that God would speak to me and through me so I could encourage you in the Lord. I prayed that the words I speak would have behind them the great love that your heavenly father has for you. And that together we would be strengthened for the kingdom of God.

How many of you saw this picture (Syrian boy on the beach). It is simply heart breaking to see such human suffering displayed so graphically in front of you. I have found myself in recent weeks feeling overwhelmed by the events going on in the world. There are so many situations, so many hurting people, so much beyond our control. Recently I sat during worship just praying that I could understand what God would have me do in response.

It is important to remember when we see these things that **first, we are not God**. We don't have infinite capacity or knowledge and so God certainly doesn't expect us to deal with all of it.

Second we need to remember that each part is interconnected. When we act in one area, I believe that this makes an affect in other areas. Likewise when we are passive or self-absorbed, pursuing only our own pleasures and satisfaction, the world is somehow diminished.

We also need to remember that every hurt matters – Each person knows the depth of their own hurt, and God sees each one. Though I have no capacity right now to help the Syrian refugees, I can continue to support organizations that do, like Samaritan's purse, like compassion international. I can also live in such a way that if an opportunity opens up to do something directly I can be ready. We were at the Erie PA Women's care center last week, and a woman gave a testimony about the pain she went through for years after having an abortion. Jesus has redeemed her, and she now wants to help tell others the truth so they can avoid the pit that she had fallen into.

I want to encourage you – give you courage – that every head, every heart, and every hand is needed - and called of God - to rise up to do his will and make a godly impact.

- Every head – That you would think of things rightly from God's perspective
- Every heart – Jesus wants to captivate your heart. To know you and work in and through you so that others may know him too.
- Every hand – That together we would be moved to action to make a difference

As I prayed and God led me back to a familiar verse in my daily bible reading. I don't always do my daily reading daily, but I encourage all of you to feed yourself continually on God's word. If you don't, you dry up and become consumed by the cares, pleasures, and concerns of this world.

Micah the prophet was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah and prophesied in Israel and Judah prior to their first exile. Micah lays out the great wickedness of the people as they had turned their backs on God. **Their dishonesty, their faithlessness, their idolatry.** But he also prophesies hope of restoration and the coming messiah to be born in Bethlehem. In the midst of this is a familiar passage.

Mic 6:6-8

⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ He has showed you, O man, 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.

So in response to the indictment of sin Micah plants a question with the people to whom he is speaking. With what shall I come before the Lord? Notice what doesn't count. Sacrifice, offering, giving that which is beyond our right to give.

- Burnt offerings, while proscribed by the law as an intermediate means of dealing with sin, was never God's heart desire
- Ten thousand rivers of oil speaks of what a rich man might try to give, in order to buy atonement – eh wrong.
- My firstborn for my transgression – now this might be a foreshadowing of God giving his son for us. But think of evil of offering your first born to pay for your own sin...

So Micah answers his own question – “He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?”

To act justly –

To love mercy –

And to walk humbly with your God.

Act Justly

Now this basically is saying **do what is right**. Now to do right, we have to think right. I said earlier we need every head thinking according to God's ways.

Luke 4:18-19

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."^e

The freedom from oppression is both physical and spiritual. There are many people in this day and age experiencing persecution. We must stand up for them and not become complacent. We must also recognize the bondage of sin that so many are locked in.

I'm going to make an aside here regarding the issue of **homosexuality**. Now, this applies equally to fornication, adultery, or any other sin. But homosexuality has a tendency to be viewed as a person's identity. That is who a person is.

The arguments going around our culture right now – and if you are on social media you see this stuff – is that what matters is allowing people to “love” each other. And there are so many in the church who want to accommodate this, and rewrite the word of God to make it say something it doesn't. Now I'm not here to condemn anyone, if you struggle with same sex attraction I'm not saying that is the worst sin ever.

But God's word is clearly spoken on this. Not only are there specific prohibitions against homosexuality – just as there are against fornication and adultery – there is also a consistent positive push towards either marriage or chaste singleness. The bible doesn't just say sex within marriage is acceptable, it says it is honorable. It says it is excellent. It says it is something to write poetry about. Even if you reason away the prohibitions against homosexuality as many do today we are left with this nagging question: Why, if homosexuality is also part of God's best for us does he not once make positive reference to that as an equally acceptable alternative?

Was Jesus afraid to go against the culture of his day? I don't think so – he often flew in the face of accepted convention to make the truth known. What did he say about divorce? It wasn't supposed to be that way! You are meant to stay together for life. He didn't back down on setting things straight regarding women being joint heirs with Christ. He took on the ideas of what the kingdom of God looked like compared to their perceptions. I just can't see how the word of God could leave that out by accident – unless of course you don't believe it is the word of God. Then you're left with the ideas of man.

So why do I say all of this, how does it relate to “act justly”?

Sin is oppression. Sin is bondage and a prison. If we simply turn a blind eye to sin and say it really isn't sin, we are encouraging people to walk into a trap and a prison. We are sentencing them to stay under the tyranny of their sin and not to find escape and freedom in the year of the Lord's favor.

Now breaking free from deeply rooted sin isn't necessarily easy. It can be a long hard road. But ONLY Jesus can set us free as we die to ourselves and take on Christ and let him live through us.

I will also say a bit about our political situation. I have been very discouraged, as have many, with the way things have been run in this country for many years. I have often felt a sense of resignation that there really isn't anything I can do about it. But that's not really true. We do need to get involved and persistently fight for the things that matter. Even when our best efforts seem to bear no fruit – don't check out. **There are actually some presidential candidates for this next go around that I like! I haven't said that since, ...well..., back when I was in college.**

So we must do right, with the leaders we support and elect, with the truth that we live by and preach, by our everyday transactions in life.

Love Mercy

Act justly, love mercy. What is mercy? Mercy is kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly.

I love mercy – especially when it is expressed toward me. Mercy has been given to us in abundance. Lamentations 3:22 says

“Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

But I don't think that's what this verse is getting at.

What about our mercies toward others. Ouch. I have at times been in situations where my mercies were consumed. My compassion fails. Oh Father – teach me to love others like you love. Let me show the compassion and mercy you have shown me. Let us look for opportunities to show mercy to others.

To Walk Humbly with Your God

So we act justly (we do right), we love mercy (we live with a compassionate heart), what does it mean to “walk humbly with your God”?

Enoch walked with his God.

Gen 5:24

Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Heb 11:5

⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

So we see from this that walking with God is being **pleasing** to God.

Walking implies activity. It is not just bowing down before God like Micah 6:6. In fact, Paul says that “hard work” is involved.

Acts 20:35

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: **'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**

Walking implies progress. Not staying in the same place, but growing in knowledge, goodness.

Col 1:10-12

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you^d to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

How do we go about working hard and making progress when we know that we are frail and weak? Charles Spurgeon had this to say:

...when you have a great deal of work to do, and the Lord is calling you to it, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with God. Do you ask, How? By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you are unfit in yourself; and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any. When you are weak, by owning your weakness you will grow strong.¹

Walking implies consistency. We are moving constantly toward something.

Gal 6:9-10

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Now, it talks about walking humbly. Humility is not looked upon as an important attribute in our day. But it is in fact a very important characteristic of greatness. When we are humble, we have a proper view of ourselves. We understand both our strengths and our weaknesses. We are not afraid to take on what God calls us to, and we do not think anything he asks of us is too small or too big.

Can a great person be humble? In fact, true greatness can only be achieved by someone who understands who he is rightly, and is willing to live his life for the benefit of others.

America was founded upon humility. George Washington and many others understood both the fallen nature on man that makes us capable of great evil as well as the vestige of the image of God in us that makes of free beings with great potential for good. That is why George Washington understood how important it was for us to be a nation of laws and not merely a nation ruled by men. He submitted himself to the authority of the law established even though he had not 1 but 2 opportunities to effectively become the King George the first of America. He was a great man, but he knew his limits. He respected others and set aside his own personal ambitions for that of our country, something bigger than himself. He was quite remarkable and honorable.

So let's talk briefly about humility.

We need to walk with humility towards the truth. Unless we submit our minds to God's mind, our ways to his way, our ideals to his highest, we will risk trading the real for the counterfeit, and turning something good into that which is evil.

¹ (from Spurgeon's Sermons, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

We need to walk with humility about ourselves.

Rom 12:3

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Humility in position – have the true heart of a servant.

Humility towards those in a lowly position.

Humility toward sinners – remember we are the same, only redeemed.

Table chart...

Conclusion

The times in which we now live are full of trouble. Probably less than experienced in previous generations or in other places. Yet in my short life span, this certainly is the most troubles I've seen. But yet this is a time which calls for the church to be the church. We need every head thinking with a godly, biblically based mind, every heart given to compassion for the lost and broken, those in bondage, and every hand engaged in helping to carry the load required.

A broken world needs lots of help. We need to boldly speak the truth in love to proclaim freedom for the captives. We need to spend ourselves to help those with addictions find freedom. We need to help those who don't know who they are find their way in Christ. We need to help broken families pick up the pieces. We need to walk humbly with our God, doing what he asks of us for the people and situations he puts in front of us. It takes courage, strength and endurance which can only come from God.

Walk with YOUR God

Finally, note that it says humbly walk with YOUR God. It really comes down to having a personal walk with Jesus. If we try and do these things on our own, or on the strength of someone else's relationship with Christ you can't get too far. We won't accomplish much in this world, and we won't be much help to the hurting people in the world around us.