

everyday matters:

micah and james on worship

selections from Micah and James

When you ask some people what worship is all about, they say, "Going to church once a year—on Easter."

Micah the prophet would have cringed at such a statement. Why? Because for Micah the worship of God was an everyday matter. He rebelled against "religious people" who went through the motions of religion and then went out and forgot all about God.

The verses from Micah in today's Scripture text represent the dialogue that took place when Micah spoke out against such people.

▶ Read Micah 6:3-4, 6-8.

Draw a box around each of the following sets of verses in the green box. Label the three boxes A, B, and C.

- A. Micah 6:3-4 B. Micah 6:6-7 C. Micah 6:8

The person speaking the words in Box C is Micah. Put his name in the margin beside Box C.

Using the margin to write in, identify the person who is most likely saying the words in Box A.

The person speaking in Box B is responding to what has been said in Box A. He feels guilty about his idolatry and his hypocrisy. He wants to repent of these sins and worship God. In verse 7 he even asks if he should sacrifice his firstborn if that will help pay for his wrongdoing. In the margin beside Box B write a word or phrase that describes this person's understanding of worship.

- ▶ In Box C, Micah is reacting against the Box B version of worship. What is good worship according to Micah?

Answer by defining each of these three phrases:
 ACT JUSTLY LOVE MERCY

WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD

- ▶ How is Micah's understanding of worship different from the kind of worship described in Box B?

▶ Read James 1:22-27.

- ▶ Which version of worship in the Micah passage—Box B or C—is James insisting on? Answer by underlining the words in Box B or C of the Micah passage. Explain your choice.

Micah 6:3-4, 6-8

³My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.

⁴I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

⁶With 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?

⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸He 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.

James 1:22-27

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

²⁵But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

cut here

» mon

Read Micah 6:6-7. Write down all the things these verses suggest people might offer to the Lord. Then consider what some people today think will earn them special favor with God. Pray that you will be able to give the Lord what He requires of you this week.

» tues

One way God has shown us what is good is through the teachings of Jesus. Read Mark 12:30-31. What does it mean to you to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? And your neighbor as yourself?

» wed

To act justly. Justice is the quality of being fair or impartial. Ask God to show you ways that you can promote this kind of justice.

» thurs

To love mercy. Mercy is showing compassion to someone, even when they don't deserve it. Who is it hardest for you to show compassion to? Pray that God will show you some specific ways to demonstrate compassion to this person/ these people this week.

» fri

To walk humbly with your God. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus says, "I am gentle and humble in heart." In other words, Jesus wasn't pushy or proud. What does it mean for you this week to walk humbly with your God?

» sat

Now that you know what God requires of you, ask the Lord for the grace to do these things this coming week.

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

Hallmark

Integrity is the hallmark or trait of people who follow God without wavering. Their words and actions, like Christ's, affirm rather than destroy. Their lifestyles are natural results of their close relationships with God.

The opposite is also true. Decayed moral standards are the hallmark of people who wander from God, who want to satisfy their own desires.

What is the hallmark of Your life?

A. W. Tozer wrote of the decay of moral standards within the Christian church much as Micah did about the communities of Judah and Israel (Micah 6:3-8):

Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when the concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standard declines along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.†

A CALL TO ACTION

Principles of Integrity

As you read each principle Tozer recommends that you live by, list one realistic way in which you can practice the principle in your own life.

First, you must forsake your sins.

"A holy God cannot be known by men of confirmed evil. . . ."

Second, you must completely commit your life to Christ by faith.

Third, let God, not sin, reign in your life. Be dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ.

Fourth, boldly challenge the cheap values the world holds dear.

Fifth, practice the art of meditating upon the majesty of God. †

†A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 192-193