

Worship Material
What does God require?
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 1st February

Begin with an opening prayer

God, you call us to walk with you
in justice,
in kindness,
in humility.

Help us to see this is what you require,
to leave behind all other expectations
and be free to walk into the future you want for us
as the people of God.

Amen.

Read Micah 6:1-8

Bible notes

Micah was Isaiah's contemporary, active in Judah up to and through the time that Israel fell to the Assyrians (about 740 BC to 698 BC). Their messages were similar but Micah's was even more focused on economic injustice and God's call on his people to live ethically in the world.

In this section, the prophet envisions God taking legal action against Judah. He enlists creation as jury in the case, which is a simple one, namely that God's people are not grateful for all that he has done for them through their history and, as a result, they are not living as God requires in the Law given to Moses. So, God retells Israel's history from the Exodus onwards, a history of failing to live up to their calling as a nation. But it is also a history marked by God's gracious acts of salvation for his people.

They have tried to placate God through acts of 'worship', e.g. burnt offerings, as if that is what God wants. They have even gone to the extreme of child sacrifice despite the Torah making it abundantly clear that this is an abomination to Yahweh (Leviticus 18:21, 20:1-5 and Deuteronomy 12:30-31, 18:10). The oracle ends with one of the most well-known utterances from the prophets in verse 8. It has nothing to do with external shows of piety and everything to do with how we live. Doing justice and loving kindness is only fully possible if we walk humbly with our God. It is simple and yet difficult and demanding.

Micah has already spelled out, in 4:1-5, that justice has to do with: economic equality, where everyone has enough to live on; peace between neighbours, where nations do nothing to make their citizens afraid; and a relationship with God marked by humble trust.

As the rest of the chapter shows us, Israel has failed at every turn. Dishonest business dealings have enriched a few at the expense of the majority. Such economic inequality is an abomination to God.

Prayer

Inspirational God,
you show us the true meaning of fellowship and faithfulness.
We rejoice at your presence with us and reassurance.
As Father, you require us to bring justice to your world:
no more, no less.
As Son, you require us to learn from Jesus to love kindness:
no more, no less.
As Holy Spirit, you require us to walk humbly with you:
no more, no less.
Amen.

A prayer to conclude

O God, what do you require of us?
Do you require us to be the best and do the most?
No.
Do you require us to turn our hearts to you and live with justice, kindness and humility?
Yes.
Give us what we need to adopt the beautiful attitudes you want for your people.
Amen.