

a) **Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly with Your God (Micah 6:8)**

Do Justice

Brueggemann, the scholar of justice, comments:

In biblical faith, the doing of justice is the primary expectation of God, for God is indeed a “lover of justice.” (Ps. 99:4) The way the Bible thinks about justice is: *justice is to sort out what belongs to whom, and return it to them*. Such an understanding implies that there is a right distribution of goods and access to the sources of life. When we control what belongs to others long enough, we come to think of it as rightly ours, and to forget it belonged to someone else. So the work of liberation, redemption, salvation, is the work of *giving things back*. Justice concerns precisely a right reading of social reality, of social power, and of social good.¹

Prophets—Isaiah and Amos, Psalmists and even Wisdom Writers—continually called Israel to “seek justice,” condemning religious rituals—worship, offering, songs, and prayers—without doing justice by helping and caring for the poor, afflicted and weak. All that worship has no meaning for God. In Is. 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24, God hates worship, songs, offerings without doing justice. In Is. 58: 6-7 , fasting doesn’t mean a thing to God unless people of God, “Undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free . . . and bring the homeless poor into your house.”

The Psalmist adds (Ps. 146 7-9) that the Lord:

Executes justice for the oppressed; . . . gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow.

The wisdom writers, too, highlight the command to defend the poor:

Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him. (Prov. 14:31) Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and will be repaid in full. (Prov. 19:17) Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing, but one who turns a blind eye will get many a curse. (Prov. 28:27) The righteous know the rights of the poor; the wicked have no such understanding. (Prov. 29:7)

Other texts equally demand Israel to do justice in dealing with the poor, in lending

¹ Ibid. 5-6.

money (Ex. 22:25; cf. Deut. 23:19-20), gleaning rights of the poor (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22; Lev. 23:22), paying wages on time for day laborers (Lev. 19:13-18), protecting aliens (Ex. 22:21), and loving neighbor. (Lev. 19:18) The true test of religion is whether the people of God practice justice and live righteously. This is measured concretely by the way the socially powerless—widow, orphan, and alien—are treated. (Jer.7:5-7; 22:3; Mic.6:8) “Religion which does not result in justice and righteousness falls under the judgment of God.”²

In short, justice is the nature of God and we have seen above what the Lord does to those who are seeking their own self-satisfaction at the cost of others—destruction, exile.

Love Kindness (Tenderly)

For Sharon Parks, the love referred here means the right relation with God and with each other. Such faithful life is characterized by a love that manifest itself in justice. Therefore, to love tenderly (kindness) is to love with an awareness of the capacity of the other to be wounded, to suffer pain, and to be dependent upon relationship with others.”³

Walk Humbly with Your God

For Thomas H. Groome:

To walk humbly with God, then, means to cling to God as the bedrock of our life, to ground one’s self in Yahweh as the only sure foothold, and no matter what precipice lies beneath us to know that security is found only in God. Such faithful walking and such a right relationship with God calls us to (1) recognize who our God is, (2) realize how God is for us, and (3) comprehend who we are as God’s people.

Who our God is?

² Wilbert R. Shenk, “The Relevance of Messianic Missiology for Mission Today,” ed. Wilbert R. Shenk, *The Transfiguration of Mission* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 9.

³ Sharon Parks, “Love Tenderly,” *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly*, Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Park & Thomas H. Groom (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), ,30, 39.

A prerequisite for walking humbly with our God is to realize who is God of our lives. Whoever it is will shape our walking. Sin always has its roots in some form of idolatry—turning away from God and placing someone or something else in God’s place.

Kavanaugh argues:

The commodity, like a god, achieves an independent existence over and against men and women. Then we begin to worship things as if they were persons, and we relate to other persons as if they are things. Fetishism of commodities is simply a form of idolatry in which human persons worship the products of their own hands.⁴

How God is for us?

In Deut. 5:6 and Ex. 20:2, God said, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” In the Hebrew Scriptures this is God’s vision of peace and justice, freedom and wholeness (shalom) for all humankind. If we put any other god in God’s place, then we are already on our way back to the slavery of Egypt (homelessness).

J.B. Phillips outlined in his work on Your God Is Too Small:

When our God is too small, then God too becomes a fetishized commodity, a product that we have made. Such false images of God are idols and idols always lead us back to Egypt again (homelessness). The true God is one we can trust to lead us to life and freedom. That is who God is and how God is for us.⁵

Who are We as God’s People?

If God is our God, then we are God’s people. If our God is a God of life and love, a God who wills freedom, justice and peace for all, then we must be a people who so live. What God wills to us becomes God’s will for us. We must live according to what God intends for us and for all—we must do God’s will. This means that to walk humbly with our kind of God, we must walk in solidarity with all people toward the values of God’s

⁴ Thomas H. Groom, “Walking Humbly with Our God,” *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly*, Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Park & Thomas H. Groom (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 50-52.

⁵ *Ibid.* 54.

reign. We must be for life, love, freedom, peace and justice because our God is for them. . . . To walk humbly with our God means that we must live with love and justice toward all God's people.⁶ (Where does the quote begin in the above paragraph?)

Phillips asserts;

To walk humbly with our God is not to turn away from the world and fix our gaze on heaven. Our walking with God in this world means walking with our neighbor in love and justice. We walk in a covenant that places the responsibility upon us of being faithful co-creators of God's reign in the world. We can turn to Isaiah 58:6 that describes "acceptable sacrifice" that Yahweh expects from a life of faith is, "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" James echoes this understanding of faith when he writes: "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:26)⁷

⁶ Ibid. 55.

⁷ Ibid. 61-62.