

TO ACT JUSTLY, LOVE TENDERLY, WALK HUMBLY

Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Parks & Thomas H. Groom, *TO ACT JUSTLY, LOVE TENDERLY, WALK HUMBLY* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986),

Micah 6:8: what does the LORD require of you? but to **do justice**, and to **love kindness**, and to **walk humbly with your God**?

Walter Brueggemann, “Voices of the Night – Against Justice”, *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly*, Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Park & Thomas H. Groom (New York: Paulist Press, 1986),

(5-28)

As Brueggemann asserts,

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. 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. 그러므로 해방 (liberation), 속죄 (redemption), 구원 (salvation) 은 남의 것을 돌려주는 사역이다.

Walter Brueggemann, “Voices of the Night – Against Justice”, *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly*, Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Park & Thomas H. Groom (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 5-6.

It is now agreed among a growing number of scholars that Micah is the voice of the village peasant against the rapacious power of the state. That is, Micah needs to be understood in terms of his social context and the social realities in which he is engaged. Micah watched that peasants were heavily taxed and state policies are characteristically a matter of indifference to the peasants, because they will not gain, in any case. So Micah raises the justice question with reference to that social development, the growing power of the urban state. The justice question is always raised *from below*, not from above. They are rather preoccupied with questions of prosperity and security and do not notice the cost of prosperity and security imposed on voiceless peasants.

Walter Brueggemann, “Voices of the Night – Against Justice”, *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly*, Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Park & Thomas H. Groom (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 7.

Love Tenderly, Sharon Parks (29-43)

According to Sharon Parks,

The word *ahab* and *hesed* is captured in the translation “to love tenderly (kindness).” The love referred here is to be like Yahweh’s covenant love, continually calling us into new and more faithful being. This means the right relation with God and with each other. Such faithful life is characterized by a love that manifest itself, not in sentimentality, but in justice. Therefore, for her, 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. 30, 39

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.

Walking Humbly with Our God, Thomas H. Groome (44-65)

Thomas H. Groome, it was probably his own roots, among the economically oppressed that gave him his passion for justice and his abhorrence of religious ritual while the demands of the covenant were being ignored. The demand for justice as the pre-condition of true worship of Yahweh is Micah's central theme (46). The first two mandates (do justice, love kindness) pertain to our treatment of other people while the third refers to our relationship with God. In fact, all three refers to our relationship with god and all three refers to our relationship with other people. In Yahweh's covenanted community, the measure of one relationship is the measure of the other.

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), 47.

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

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.

Who is Our God?

Every attempt to live the meaning of our lives is a statement about our ultimate center of value, about who is our God. A prerequisite for waling humbly with our God is to realize who is God of our lives. Whoever it is will shape our walking (50). Sin always has its roots in some form of idolatry – turning away from God and placing someone or something else in God's place. Our struggle with idolatry is no less than it was for the Israelites. In fact, given the social and economic structures in which we dwell, the temptation to idolatry may be more compelling in our own age than at any other time in history.

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), 51.

John Francis Kavanaugh argues that the dominant mode of relating to life in this consumer culture is the "commodity form." In our form of culture we fetishize our commodities and give them a life of their own. Kavanaugh writes, "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." Feitishism of commodities is simply a form of idolatry in which human persons worship the products of their own hands.

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), 51-52.

The ultimate "God question" that we must ask ourselves, according to Kavanaugh, is:

“What god do you believe in?” In a culture where the things produced and consumed take primacy over the producers/consumers (we exist to produce/consume instead of producing/consuming to exist), it is counter-cultural to let God be our God. In a commodity form of culture, it is very difficult to avoid idolatry.

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), 52.

To walk humbly with our God means to place our trust only in God as the firm foothold that holds us on the mountain of life. That kind of conversion requires critical consciousness of how we fetishize our commodities and a spirit of relinquishment that is willing to “let go” of the false gods to which we cling. The temptation to let something other than God be God reflected in the temptation of Jesus in the desert.

How God is for us?

In Deut. 5:6 and Ex. 20:2 we read: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Only when we know how God is for us is the first commandment stated. If we put any other god in God’s place, then we are already on our way back to the slavery of Egypt (homelessness). In the Hebrew Scriptures this is God’s vision of peace and justice, freedom and wholeness (shalom) for all humankind. Having been tested on who is his God and after his temptation, Jesus comes into the synagogue at Nazareth as the suffering servant in whom God’s spirit is working to fulfill the kingdom promise of Isaiah 61. Jesus now knows that God, his and ours, is a God who brings release to captives, sight to the blind, and liberty to those who are oppressed (Luke 4:16-19).

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He quotes J.B. Phillips who outlined, in his work on *Your God Is Too Small*, false images of God that are prevalent even among those of us who claim to worship the one true God. He listed: God the resident policeman, the parental hangover, the grand old man, the managing director, the puppeteer, the god in a box and many more. 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.

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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 reign. We must be for life, love, freedom, peace and justice because our God is for them. To the degree that we walk in death, hatred, oppression, violence, and injustice, or complicity thereto, the less we walk with this God that we claim to be ours. To walk

humbly with our God means that we must live with love and justice toward all God's people.

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), 55.

The basic operating principle of our social and political structure is competition rather than cooperation, individualism instead of solidarity, self-sufficiency instead of interdependence. To live our identity as God's people calls us to be counter-cultural, to swim against the tide of our ethos and transform it.

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), 56.

To represent Jesus Christ means to act on his behalf. It does not mean to replace him or substitute for him. The call to service also points to the need for conversion on our part away from the traditional teaching. This kind of "walking with" calls for a kenosis on our part, the kind of self-emptying that Paul attributes to the Christ, the one that we would represent (see Mk. 2:5-7). We must die to the image of "teacher."

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To walk humbly with our God is not to turn away from the world and fix our gaze on heaven. Our walking is 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. Walking humbly with God brings us more deeply into it with a new sense of purpose – its transformation. To highlight the responsibility for the world that humble walking with God place on us, 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).

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