

Be Good - Do what's right!

I don't know about you, but I can remember my mom and dad constantly saying to me when I left home - Be a good boy Mark! And to my sister - Be a good girl Cindy! And to my brother - Be good Greg!

Laurie and I said it to our kids too!

And you know what, my mom and dad still occasionally tell me to be a good boy! I guess I will always need the reminder!

"Be Good!" Now we could get into a big Theologically debate over whether people are good enough to save themselves or should be told to be good but that isn't where I am going today.

I am just simply recognizing that there is wisdom in a parents words when they tell their children to be good; which simply means "do the right thing – do what is right and good Mark."

And you know what – God does the same sort of thing with us too.

Psalm 37:3, *"Trust in the Lord and do good."*

So bear with me today! We need some good people out there in the world today!

We live in scary times today with the Pandemic, and the economy and then with the murder of George Floyd.

I generally don't say much about anything politically charged events but watching something so horrific as the video I saw of a man losing his life under the relentless pressure of a man's knee traumatized my heart. I don't care if the man was guilty of a \$20 fraudulent check crime or if he was a seasoned criminal strung out on fentanyl, how he died was criminal.

My heart hurt so bad for that man and his family, people I don't even I didn't know that I found myself weeping uncontrollably.

Now, I'm in favor of peaceful protests. Sometimes people have to stand up and speak up when those in control don't respond to our concerns. I am against anarchy and riots and looting and people organized and paid to travel about creating that anarchy and then painting all law enforcement as the bad guy. There are villains and heroes in this story but law enforcement in general

is good. All the law enforcement people I know are heroes in my book. And the people who stood by on that sidewalk and openly criticized and condemned the actions of the officers who relentlessly continued their unjust actions while a 45-year-old man cried out for his mommy – they were heroes in my book too! They were speaking out for justice!

Proverbs 31:8-9, calls us to do just that!

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly.”

Who will stand up and speak up for what is right? We need Christians to not turn a blind eye to injustice, but to stand up and speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and for the innocent who are in the path of danger.

We need some superhero Christians

Isaiah 1:17, *“Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.”*

Superheroes had mottos:

Superman: *“Fighting for Truth, Justice and the American way!”*

Spiderman: *“With great power comes great responsibility.”*

Superhero quotes:

Wonder Woman’s mom Queen Hippolyta: *“In a world of ordinary mortals, you are a wonder woman.”* Don’t live an ordinary life – your extraordinary!

Superman: *“You are much stronger than you think you are. Trust me.”*

The Flash: *“Life doesn’t give us purpose. We give life purpose.”*

The idea: Make your life count for something good!

The Apostle Paul – that great hero of the faith said to the **Galatians 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. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

To the Thessalonians he said...

2 Thessalonians 3:13, *“And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.”*

Do what is good! Do you know what God considers good?

If I said to you, be a good boy, be a good girl, a good man or woman, what would that look like?

Micah 6:8-9,

“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. Listen! The Lord is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom—”

This was in answer to the defense Micah was making on behalf of the city of Jerusalem. The Lord was upset with them for their empty faith and rituals. They were living life contrary to those claims – ***What has gotten into you?***

Micah 6:3-5 NLT, *“O my people, what have I done to you? What have I done to make you tired of me? Answer me! For I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to help you. Don’t you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead? And remember your journey from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, when I, the Lord, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness.”*

Micah, on behalf of the nation of Israel, begins to question himself and Israel, feeling an overwhelming sense of guilt for both of them. ***They knew they were in trouble and couldn’t figure what to do about it.***

Micah 6:6-7 NLT, *“What can we bring to the Lord? Should we bring him burnt offerings? Should we bow before God Most High with offerings of yearling calves? Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins?”*

Micah writes at a time when Israel and Judah had risen to heights of economic affluence, but they were spiritually bankrupt. There’s certainly nothing wrong with financial prosperity, so long as it does not replace our devotion to God.

So, Micah is coming before the Lord empty-handed spiritually speaking. He sees the insufficiency of sacrifices. External rituals aren’t enough.

The people have lost touch with the Scriptures and forgotten how to approach the Lord. They’re like people who attend worship only once a year and who’ve forgotten what to do/what goes on in church.

If we separate ourselves enough from God and His will for our lives, *will we be able to recognize His voice when He responds to our cries for help?*

What does a healthy relationship with God look like?

The quality of our worship is important, but not nearly as important as the quality of our lives. Micah is saying, don't assume that religious ritual alone will be enough to restore strained our relationship with God.

“Burnt offerings, using year old calves.” Year old calves were regarded as the choicest sacrifices.

“Thousands of rams,” proposes quantities of animals to try and gain God's favor.

“Ten thousand rivers of oil.” Oil was used in Temple worship, but all the oil in the world will not bring us into fellowship with God.

Neither will even **giving up our “firstborn”**, the most precious possessions.

Don't misunderstand, both in the old and New Testaments, sins were paid for through substitutionary sacrifices, the innocent for the guilty. That is what God did for us when He gave up His first & only born son for us - Jesus Christ.

These verses aren't saying that sacrifices are meaningless! No, but in both cases, sacrifices had to be accompanied with the right heart attitude and when they were – peoples living actions demonstrated those right attitudes.

So if you have settled you sin before **YOUR** God, how should you then live?

That is what **Micah 6:8-9 NIV** is saying...

“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. Listen! The Lord is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom—”

Verse 8 is not the plan or path of salvation. God is stating what He wants from those who are already His people. Acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly are the outgrowth of genuine faith.

A living faith is seen by godly behavior. Our actions reveal whether our faith is true or not.

Micah lists three characteristics of a life that demonstrate authentic faith and a desire to live for God.

1. **To act justly** – to do what’s right – to be a good boy - Mark...

What are we doing to promote justice in our community?

Do we keep informed?

Do we offer to be advocates for people in need?

Do we speak out against injustice?

All the super heroes we love do this! It is because of this that we love them.

President Lincoln said, *“To sin by silence when one should speak makes cowards of men.”*

There is no place for injustice, inequity or unfairness in our lives. Our faith must lead us to ethical and fair and equality loving behavior.

And let me say this: **Knowledge without responsible action is sin.**

James said 4:17, *“If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”*

We should ask ourselves: *What can I do to preserve human rights? How can I uphold the sanctity of every life? How should I respond to injustice?*

2. **To love mercy**...

A businessman needed to have a professional photo taken. When the photographer was done, the man looked at his photo and complained, *“This doesn’t do me justice.”* The photographer responded, **“With a face like yours you don’t need justice—you need mercy.” Not nice man!**

We all need mercy, and we need to offer it. We are compelled by Christ to offer unconditional acceptance of others, in spite of their faults, idiosyncrasies, sins and shortcomings.

We need to approach people without pre-conceived notions; we should give others the benefit of the doubt, and not let things like ethnicity or gender come in the way of friendship.

And loving mercy means we grant forgiveness and show kindness when it isn’t necessarily deserved. We should ask ourselves: **How can I show mercy to others?** Who is in need, and how can I help?

Grace is getting what you don't deserve.
Mercy is not getting what you do deserve.

3. "To walk humbly"...

Humility means being precisely the person we actually are before God. A humble person can be authentic, no masks, no facade. If we're humble we can be ourselves—we don't have to act spiritual.

We should ask ourselves: How can I be more genuine or authentic? As I look at my successes in life and share them, can I also be as contemplative and honest in sharing about my failures.

I think people are more prone to learn what to do right when they know they weren't alone when they got it wrong too.

Micah offers us hope in humility—earlier in **Micah 5:2**, he wrote that the Messiah will be born in the lowly town of Bethlehem.

I hope our neighbors, friends, co-workers can see the humility of Christ working in us.

Philippians 2:6-9, *"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. 9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names."*

I hope our world can see Jesus in us acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly before God. People we know may not read the Bible, but they will read us. **It's been said,**

"A Christian is a mind through which Christ thinks; a heart through which Christ loves; a voice through which Christ speaks; a hand through which Christ helps."

You need a superhero in your story! Let Jesus, the greatest superhero who ever lived, be your hero! If there was a superhero T-shirt for Jesus, I would wear that, wouldn't you? And in His absence, He left us to be the superheroes the world needs to see.

Jesus said, in **John 14:12**, *“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”*

So be a superhero for Jesus - **Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before your God.**

Prayer: Lord, show us how to promote justice in an unjust world; show us how to be merciful to the undeserving; enable us to humbly accept and be ourselves before you and others.

Enable us to live out our faith. Jesus, you are our hero – you embraced justice by paying our penalty, your love and mercy toward us empowered you and your example of humility inspires us.

Jesus, we receive you this morning as our superhero who came to rescue us from the tyranny of sin and guilt and shame. You

Let your mind and attitude be our guide, in your name we pray, Amen.