

“We Are Called”

Micah 6:1-8, Psalm 103:6

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Rev. Jeong Park

Fair Oaks United Methodist Church

One of our church members shared a quote with me and I want to pass it on to you. It reads, "Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil - it has no point." We believe we are people of God who trust God as our guide and follow God's direction in our journey. In Christ, we found the meaning and purpose of life and hope for the future. If we compare our life to a big mosaic puzzle, our faith journey is to find small pieces of puzzles and discover hidden meanings of God's grace in life. In our Old Testament reading, the prophet Micah has a clear point. He was a farmer but he heard God's voice for his nation. He delivered God's challenges to his people saying, "What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" This morning, I hope that we all listen to Micah and discern what God is looking for among us.

I want to talk about three things: to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. This is what God wants. First, **To do justice:** The prophet Micah was a farmer from a small village. But when he saw the injustice that was going on in society, he felt called to speak against the ones in power. He raised his voice for the poor farm workers. He wouldn't be afraid to take the suffering at the hands of powerful landlords. He was willing to take risk and to be right there among the weak and his people. In other words, Micah was 'the voice of the workers and that of common everyday people'. To do justice is not easy work but hard. It requires people to work together, challenge the present unjust system and change it. The process of doing justice is to make transformation of the world into a place where God reigns.

Early this week, there was sad news about Rev. Frank Schaefer, a United Methodist clergy in Pennsylvania. He was accused of officiating over the marriage of his gay son back in 2007. A clergy trial has given him a 30-day suspension and told him that if he can't uphold the church law, then he will lose his clergy credentials. This was a tragic outcome to a situation which should have never been brought to a church trial. Charges were brought against Rev. Schafer just weeks before the 6 year statute of limitations would have prevented charges. The charges were brought by the son of a music director who had been dismissed by the congregation. The situation demonstrates the church at its

worst, both to those outside the institution as well as those agonizing over this display of institutional pathology.

Rev. Frank told his people and the jury that he will not change his mind. He added to say, "I will minister to all people equally. We as a church need to stop judging people, stop treating people as second-class Christians and that is going to be my message." Since 1972, our Methodist Church still takes the stance that the practice of homosexuality is *incompatible with Christian teaching*. And the church's law prohibits United Methodist Churches from hosting and clergy from performing *ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions*. The reality between our church's rules and human rights makes it challenging. Remember Jesus Christ's teachings and his trial before the court of Jewish religious leaders. I believe that the church is a church for all people. This is what Jesus taught us to do. I encourage you to give this your sincere thought and prayers.

Secondly, **to love kindness**: What does it mean to love kindness? Eugene Peterson, the author of *the Message*, paraphrases our Scripture reading this way. It says "it's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously." **Be compassionate and loyal in your love!** Mother Teresa who dedicated her whole life to the poor in India carried her business card which says:

The fruit of silence is prayer.

The fruit of prayer is faith.

The fruit of faith is love.

The fruit of love is service.

The fruit of service is peace.

The essence of Christian faith is to experience compassion and love in your heart by the grace of God and to work for justice and peace. What is compassion and love? I want to share a story with you. A young boy, Charlie was one of those kids who the Sunday School teachers just could not get a hold on. When it came time for the Christmas pageant, the teachers thought themselves wise to give Charlie a simple part. Charlie would be the innkeeper. This would mean saying, "No room" three times. The night of the pageant two of the children dressed as Joseph and Mary came to the inn. "No room," said Charlie. The couple knocked on the door a second time. "NO ROOM!" Charlie repeated. Banging on the door even harder, desperately seeking space for themselves and their new baby, Joseph and Mary pleaded with the innkeeper,

"Please, is there any room in the inn?" **Moved with compassion**, Charlie forgot his line. "Oh," he said, "why don't you take my room tonight?" The pageant came to a complete halt. Some parents were upset. They had spent big bucks on their children's outfits. But for many who had come in the spirit seeking the presence of God, Charlie's words of kindness had taught them something about loving tenderly.

We know that there were nearly 5,000 people killed from Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban, Philippines. The news report says that it affected more than 11 million people. In the U.S. we have had severe tornadoes in Midwest states. According to news reports, a powerful tornado destroyed or damaged an estimated 250-500 homes. The most widespread damage occurred in the town of Washington, Illinois. As I announced last Sunday, we hope to have a special UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) offering to show our compassion and loyalty in our love for tornado victims in the Midwest and typhoon victims in the Philippines. God showed us his compassion through sending Jesus Christ. As Jesus obeyed and shared his great love through his sacrifice, death and resurrection, we are called to practice his teachings.

Lastly, **to walk humbly with God**: Walking humbly with God is an expression of our Christian faith and confession. John Wesley emphasized three simple rules in our Methodism: Do No Harm, Do Good and Stay in Touch with God. The unique contribution of John Wesley's theology is three stages of Grace, especially, the last stage of 'sanctifying grace'. After we receive grace and salvation from God's forgiveness and acceptance, our Christian journey is not completed yet, but a new beginning in Christ. Salvation is not a static, onetime event in our lives. It is an ongoing experience of God's gracious presence transforming us into whom God intends us to be. Through God's sanctifying grace, we grow mature in our ability as Jesus lived.

Let us be open to receive God's continuing grace, invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and let God work within us and through us as we journey humbly with God. Amen.