

- [Micah 6:1-8](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:18-31](#)
- [Matthew 5:1-12](#)
- [Psalm 15](#)

I spent too much time during the ice and snow last week watching the news and, yes, it did leave me in a very depressed state. Every bit of it involved some kind of immoral and unjustifiable cruelty against helpless people.

As I looked at the assigned readings for this morning, God's words spoken through the prophet Micah this morning seem directed at us, at our country. Let me paraphrase God's complaints a bit to include some of the headlines:

The Lord has a controversy with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

“O my people, what have I done to you?
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

I brought you forth as refugees from tyranny and oppression across the globe.
I redeemed you from slavery to merchants and kings.
I sent visionary leaders to mark your path and guide your way.

Remember how I crowned all your righteous struggles with victory?"

But you said, "I will placate the Lord with offerings so he will indulge a little unfaithfulness here and there."

You thought, "I will pay lip service to his love for the poor, the outcast, and the foreigner, but I don't want to be informed or get involved."

You gave a wink and a nod to the sexual predation of women, men, and children; and you even cast out your own children - especially your gay and lesbian children - as *an offering for your own prosperity and salvation!*

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly *with* God.

I didn't see much of that in the news this week.

But it's not all been bad news. The other side of today's news is that people are answering the call. We see

people everywhere putting their bodies on the line for the sake of justice. We see them extend themselves in kindness to those who are wounded or endangered by the chaos. We see a nation-wide uprising to end toleration of sexual predation of any sort which the powerful are resisting.

Yes, things are bad. Very bad. But (and maybe because of it) we also are witnessing the rise of the good with a fierceness and a resolve that *will* change the world for the better in the end. (If you've read much scripture, you do know how this story turns out.)

Last week the Minneapolis Emergency Management Director Rachel Sayre said publicly,

“In these times, you see both the best and the worst. The worst is the terror and the feeling of helplessness. The best will continue to be our community's response, the way we are showing up for each other. We're showing up for each other in the absolute worst of times.”

The Beatitudes are words of comfort and encouragement for an oppressed and soon to be “illegal” group of people, the disciples of Jesus, who were also living in the absolute worst of times. This morning, his words to them belong to

you. I'm sure many of you have felt these very things in the past few days.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It sometimes feels like God is absent. [*We don't want God to harden pharaoh's heart until the whole Egyptian nation has a change of heart; we want to get out of here now!*] Be patient. Trust. He has never failed us. He will not fail us now. Your spirit will be full again.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

How many of us are broken-hearted by all we see going on, feeling... knowing we've lost something very precious we will never get back? Mourning is part of what we are experiencing and that is important to acknowledge.

As Christians, we will find our spirits broken from time to time.

We will experience change and loss and we will mourn.

Because we are his disciples, we will endure in gentleness, seeking and serving Christ in all persons, even when it's hard.

Because we are his disciples, we will hunger and thirst for righteousness until human dignity is respected everywhere and justice is established across the earth.

Because we are his disciples, we will be peacemakers and reconcilers, and that will be a sign to all that we **are** children of God.

We will be - Christians already are being - reviled and persecuted and slandered and murdered for doing right by God and their neighbors.

What God demands of us in this moment is what he has always demanded:

That we stand up for justice in the face of injustice;

That we stand up for kindness in the face of cruelty;

And that we walk in humility with God before the very face of pride and power.

We are soldiers of a different kind of army. This is our moment. This is our war, not against flesh and blood, but against forces of evil that corrupt and destroy human souls, communities, and nations. They will persecute us.

They will slander us. They will treat us the same way they treated the prophets of old. We will show up for one another. We will show up for our community. We will show up for our nation and the world, for justice, for kindness, and for our Father.

And we will rejoice and be glad, for our reward will be ... and for those of us who already know Christ in our hearts, our reward already is ... great in heaven.