

January 29, 2017
4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts for this week's Blended (Traditional) and Contemporary Services:

Micah 6:1-8 (NIRV)

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 (NIRV) Matthew 5:1-12 (ESV)



Made New to Serve

He had told you, O child of God, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (mercy) and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Intro – This week, we look at being made new to serve. The exhortation recorded by the prophet Micah provides a roadmap for what such service might look like – justice, mercy and faithfulness. It all starts with the cross of Christ.

I. Made New by the Cross

a. Our Lord's "Sermon on the Mount" lays out how God's people are to live. We are to be God's light in the world, and to live holy and faithful lives, in witness and service to him. It's a tall order! Indeed, it is beyond us.

b. But God in his mercy fulfilled the demands of the Law in Christ, so that through faith in him God credits us with Christ's perfect holiness and faithfulness!

- ✓ **Key point** – Jesus fulfilled the demands of the Law, both in his living and in his dying. The cross is the culmination of his perfectly holy and faithful life. A way to visualize it is to see the cross Christ carried as each one of us! By faith in him, we are made new in God's eyes, even as we grow in this life in becoming the holy and faithful people he declares us to be.

II. Made New to Serve

a. Having been made new, we are sent forth to be God's witnesses in service to the world.

b. What does that look like? The prophet Micah recorded it simply – do justice, love mercy and walk humbly in faith with God.

(1) We witness to our faith in a God who created the heavens and the earth, as we witness to his care for ALL that he created. JUSTICE is a first article gift to the world – all people matter to the Creator. As we work to "do justice" today, we witness to our belief that there is a God who alone determines the worth of what he created. For God, justice is that we all get the goodness God set aside for us when he created us.

(2) We witness to our faith in a God who redeemed the world, as we witness to his sacrificial love for us. Christ's suffering, death and resurrection are how God has revealed his true nature. Though the creation is fallen and we, now, deserve punishment and death, nevertheless in his MERCY God offers us forgiveness, peace and life through the Son. As we work to "love mercy" today, we witness to our belief that God so loved the world that he died for us! For God, mercy is that we do NOT get the judgment reserved for sinners.

(3) We witness to our faith in a God who daily cleanses us and makes us holy (sanctifies us), as we witness to God's steadfast promises of life and forgiveness. God's FAITHFULNESS is revealed in his continuing presence with us, today, in Word and sacrament. His faithfulness makes it possible for us to "walk faithfully with our God." As we live out our faith in the world today enacting justice and mercy, we give witness to our belief that it is still God's world! For God, faithfulness is that he loves us even when we do not love him, and his love makes it possible for us to love others, as he has loved us in Christ.

Closing – We are made new by the cross of Christ. Having been made new, God sends us as missionaries, today, into our world to be his light, through witness and service to him.

All Glory to God alone!

Pastor Buono