

Be Fair, Be Nice, Be Humble

Today is Veteran's Day.

A day we recognize veterans
Both living and dead
Who have served in the military.

We are grateful for their service to our nation
And are thankful for their sacrifice.

We are also grateful to those choosing alternative service
Who consciously objected to war
And who served our country in other ways.

Before 1954, Veteran's Day was called Armistice Day.

Armistice Day was the day WWI ended.

From the History Channel: "At the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the Great War ends. At 5 a.m. that morning, Germany, bereft of manpower and supplies and faced with imminent invasion, signed an armistice agreement with the Allies in a railroad car outside Compi gne, France."

Today we recognize its 100th anniversary.

WWI left nine million soldiers dead
And 21 million wounded.
At least five million civilians died from disease
Starvation and exposure
As well as being collateral damage.

All told 14 million lives were lost in a tad over 4 years.
14 million! Can you even fathom?

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That's roughly 116,600 people dying/day.
What carnage!

The author Kurt Vonnegut in *Break of Champions*
Describes Armistice Day on the battlefield.

“All the people of all the nations, which had fought in the First World War, were silent during the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of Armistice Day, which was the eleventh day of the eleventh month. It was during that minute in nineteen hundred and eighteen, that millions upon millions of human beings stopped butchering one another.”

The cannons stopped booming
The rifles stopped cracking
Everything stopped . . .
All that remained was silence.

The men crawled out of the trenches
Dropped their weapons in the mud
Stood silent for a minute
And turned and went home.

Again from Vonnegut: “I have talked to old men who were on battlefields during that minute. They have told me in one way or another that the sudden silence was the Voice of God.”

I can appreciate the awesomeness of the moment.

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Sandi read Micah 6:8.

Not only is it a familiar text
It is also a beloved one
Similar in popularity to Psalm 23 and John 3:16.

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Micah, the person, was from a small rural town in Judah.

He lived during tumultuous period in Israel's history.

Israel was a divided nation.

There was the northern kingdom called Israel.

And there was the southern kingdom called Judah.

Micah witnessed the conquest of Israel

By the Assyrians in 722 BC

And he prophesied the same fate for the Judah.

Micah lived during the same period as the prophet Isaiah.

He was the first prophet to prophesy

That Jerusalem, the city of God

Would fall to a foreign invader.

It happened in 587 BC

When Babylon conquered the city.

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Micah the prophet, was a doomsayer

His writings filled with God's coming wrath.

All is not well in Judah

God is angry.

The people have rejected God's love and guidance.

They are wicked!

They are violent!

They are full of deceit!

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God raises an indictment against the people.

Chapter 6, the larger context of our beloved passage
Begins with an image of a trial.

God is judge and he speaks to the accused people of Israel:

Micah 6:1 NRSV Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

The mountains and the hills becomes the jury.

The courtroom is silent.

The people are on trial.

The voice of the Judge continues:

Micah 6:3 ESV “O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery”

The people stand condemned!

God has fulfilled his covenant promises . . .
But what of the people?

Silence. Not a whisper nor a word.

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In verse 6, the voice changes.

It is no longer the voice of God but the voice of Micah.

The voice becomes rhetorical.

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It calls them to a higher vision in religion.

It raises 5 questions

Each a more amplified version of the preceding one:

**6.6 ESV With what shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings?
With calves a year old?**

**7 ESV Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?**

The rhetoric begins to be exaggerated

**Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of
my body for the sin of my soul?**

The last question errs on the side of preposterous.

Not that human sacrifice was unheard of.

Many nations surrounding Israel practiced it
It was never, ever advocated within the Jewish religion.

The 5 questions point to the ultimate question
What DOES the Lord desire from us?

Is it simply practicing religious rituals?
Is this what makes us right with God?

Is increasing the size of the sacrifice more acceptable to God?

In contemporary terms, we can ask . . .

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Is our weekly attendance in church
Our tithes and offerings
Our prayers and our daily devotions enough?

Is our serving on the board
Singing in the choir
Or sweeping the leaves off the walks enough?

Yes, these are good and important things.

But is this what God is ultimately looking for in us?

The answer of course is no!

8 NRSV 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?

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God has indicted his people
On the evidence that their religion
Was void in three areas:

Social justice, civility towards one another, and humility.

That about sums up what is lacking in our world today!

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We live in a world filled with violence.

Every day we read in the paper and hear on the news
Shootings in the streets of our city

Yet another mass shooting this time in CA.
On the heels of the Pittsburgh synagogue killings
on and on and on and on.

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We hear of people fleeing for their lives
Whole families fleeing from violence

In Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

There seem to be no place on earth unaffected by violence
Where people have learned to live together peacefully.

From Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon
To Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan
The world is filled with butchery.

Was it worse in Micah’s time than now?

Or do we live the same vicious cycles of carnage
Over and over and over again.

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Imagine, though, what would happen
If everyone centered their lives around this theme

To do justice, to love kindness
And to walk humbly with God?

If we as individuals would . . . ?
If we as a church could . . . ?
If we as a nation might . . . ?
What then?

**Micah 7:16-19 Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived
of all their powers They will come trembling out of
their dens; they will turn in fear to the Lord our God**

Unfortunately the only time I see that day coming
Will be the day when Christ returns
Bringing in a new day of armistice.

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When, perhaps, at the 12th minute of the 12th hour
Of the 12th day of the 12th month
Silence will cover the land
And the carnage will cease
And peace will reign forever.

That will be a day!

But until that day
Christ calls you and me to be the church.

To find balance in our worship and our work
In our rituals and our service

To divide equally our attention and focus
On doing justice
Loving kindness
And walking humbly with our God.

May it be so!

May the power of the Spirit of Christ
Be upon us all as we seek
' To worship and serve Him
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.