

Micah 6:6-8
Be Fair, Be Nice, Be Humble!
WRCoB 11.15.2020

The election is finally over!

Those who voted for Trump are certainly disappointed.

Consequently, those who voted for Biden
Are celebrating his victory.

The results of the election show a sharply divided country.

Roughly, 77,000,000 votes went Biden's way
Compared to 72,000,000 for Trump.

The question remains
Will the president-elect be able to bridge the abyss
Between Republicans and Democrats?

I pray so.

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Not only do we see a divided country
We see a divided church.

It appears that the church is taking sides as well
Politically, socially, and theologically.

Some seem more committed to their political affiliations
Than they are to the teachings of Jesus.

Churches are slowly shifting towards homogeneity.

Where once, conservatives and progressives
Could sit in the same pew
Worshiping the same Lord

Today, we find the church gravitating into subgroups
Left leaning moving towards the left
And right leaners toward the right
Within the larger framework of Christianity.

The election showed differences
Between the Christian supporters of Trump
And Christians who voted for Biden.

Most Trump supporters self-identify as evangelical.

Mainline Protestant typically went Biden's way.

So what's the difference?

According to John Green
Author of *Religion and the Culture Wars*
There are four cardinal beliefs in evangelicalism

The first belief is that the Bible is inerrant. It [is] without error in all of its claims about the nature of the world and the nature of God.

A second belief is that the only way to salvation is through belief in Jesus Christ.

A third belief . . . is the idea that individuals must accept salvation for themselves. They must become converted. Sometimes that's referred to as a born-again experience, sometimes a little different language.

The fourth cardinal belief of evangelicals is the need to proselytize, or in their case, to spread the evangel, to evangelize.

Of course, this is a huge generalization.

No one fits the mold exactly.

On the other hand, those that voted for Biden
Tended to identify more
With what is called Mainline Protestants.

John Green identifies them this way.

Mainline Protestants have a different perspective So, for instance, they would read the Bible, not as the inerrant word of God, but as a historical document, which has God's word in it and a lot of very important truths, but that needs to be interpreted in every age by individuals of that time and that place.

Mainline Protestants tend to also believe that Jesus is the way to salvation. But many mainline Protestants would believe that perhaps there are other ways to salvation as well. People in other religious traditions, even outside of Christianity, may have access to God's grace and to salvation as well, on their own terms, and through their own means.

Mainline Protestants are much less concerned with personal conversion. Although they do talk about spiritual transformation

Finally, mainline Protestants are somewhat less concerned with proselytizing than evangelicals. Certainly proselytizing is something they believe in. They believe in sharing their beliefs with others, but not for the purposes of conversion necessarily. The idea of spreading the word in the mainline tradition is much broader than simply preaching the good news. It also involves economic development. It involves personal assistance, charity, a whole number of other activities.

With Bible in hand, you can defend either position.

But does it have to be one over/against another?

Is it possible to encapsulate both within one's faith?

Not only do I think it possible
I believe it is a more complete faith.

And I use Micah's text as a simple formula
Pointing to a more balanced theology.

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According to the prophet Micah
God's requirements are not complicated!

Micah 6:8 NRSV

**⁸ 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?**

I call it a three-fold walk in faithfulness.

It has an outward, an inward and an upward component to it.

Micah 6:8 exemplifies a godly life.

It covers three aspects of a balanced faith.

First, we are to do justice.

This is the outward focus
Pointing toward the needs of the world.

A desire and compassion to build a just and humane society.

Secondly, we are to love kindness.

This is the inward focus

Developing and displaying the fruits of the Spirit
Expressed in our relationships to one another.

And the third component, to walk humbly with God.

This is the upward focus in a personal relationship
With God through Jesus Christ.

Three aspects, outward, inward, and upward.

- The public side of faith, working for peace and justice
- The interpersonal side, being loving and kind.
- And the private side of faith, the awareness that God is God and you are not him!

Another person said it well this way.

Be fair, Be nice, Be humble!

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As Christians, we are tempted to think

That we have covered all the necessary ground
In our walk with Christ
By simply believing Jesus died for our sins.

By coming to church weekly

Giving our tithes, time, and talents.

By reading our Bibles

And praying for others.

We are all the more tempted to think

We've done very well

When we've agreed to serve on the board
Sing in the choir
Or shovel the snow off the walks.

These are all good and necessary things.

And are expectations of Christian living.

But if we do these things
Without being just or kind or humble

We fall into the group
God had indicted through Micah.

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Micah lived during the time of a divided kingdom.

He emphasized justice
Because he saw injustice.

He emphasized peace
Because he saw none.

Like a lawyer defending God's case
Micah makes clear
Things are not the way they are meant to be.

God hated the injustice
Hated the ugliness
Hated the arrogance.

It pained God to see the division.

God speaks in an earlier passage.

Micah 6:3 "O my people, what have I done to you? In what way have I wearied you? Answer me! ⁴ For I

brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery.

Is there anything the people might do
For God to forgive them?
For God to look beyond their transgressions?

Anything they could do to be reconciled to God?

6:6 “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 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

No! No! No!

God doesn't want that!

God doesn't want ritual, obligatory duty!

God wants our lives to reflect a change of heart
A right spirit within us!

God wants his saving presence reflected in our behavior

Not only at church
But at home and in the workplace too

And certainly in our politics.

As well as with our family, friends, neighbors
And with strangers.

He wants his Spirit manifested in our daily living.

God wants us to LIVE as Christians.

And living as Christians means just that
To live as Christ lived
And as Christ lives within us!

He wants our walk to reflect Christ's walk.

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Faith is not only about having a personal relationship
With Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It has to include kingdom building.

It is more than being saved.

It is about the hard work
Of making the societies we live in more just.

It is not about living a moral, upright life
So that we can get into heaven.

It is about making the world a better place to live.

Salvation is personal.

Salvation is corporate.

The kingdom of God is not some faraway place.

It's not the place we go when we die.

Its potential is right here, on earth.

We, through the Spirit of Christ, are kingdom builders.

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So whether you identify as evangelical
Or mainline protestant

We must work together to build the kingdom of God
On earth as it is in heaven.

Both groups' emphases are important
In the life and work of the church.

We need both.

We need balance.

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So whether you self-identify as evangelical
Or as a mainline protestant

OR some combination of both like myself.

I call myself an Evangelical Anabaptist.

For all of us.

Left-leaners or right hardliners,
Progressives or conservatives
Republican or Democratic Christian

What does the Lord require of us all?

To do justice
Love kindness
And walk humbly with your God.

Be fair
Be nice
Be humble.

That about covers it for the glory of God!