

“Walk Humbly with God”

Rev. Dr. Alan Brehm posted one of his sermons from 2014 on <thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com>. He wrote, “We as a people are, I think, tragically confused about how to find life. I think we’re not even sure what we’re looking for in life. But whatever it is we’re looking for – happiness, fulfillment, success, or just pleasure – it seems to me that we’re looking for it in all the wrong places. And we look to all the wrong people as our examples of what it means to be happy.”

Brehm continued, **“The rich and famous and beautiful have become the inspiration for many when it comes to how to find the life they’re looking for. And yet the path many of them have shown us is that the way to be happy is to do whatever we please. The sad truth is that when we turn freedom into a license to do as we please, the end result, time after time, is that people get hurt.”**

Brehm went on to write, “We find happiness and true freedom through the ‘truth that sets us free.’ And an integral part of that truth is that we find fulfillment in life when we do what is right, when we treat others with love and kindness, and when we recognize that we are not the masters of our own fate. But the converse is also true: when we live for ourselves and our own selfish desires, when we treat others as a means to attain only what we want from them, and when we place ourselves on the throne of our lives, we become slaves to our selfishness, and lose the chance for true freedom and happiness in life.”

Brehm pointed out, “But the lessons of prophets and sages of all the ages is that we do not find life by indulging the will to do whatever we please. We find life by following the truth of what is right and good and beneficial to us all.” Brehm concluded, **“I believe our lesson from the prophet Micah points us in this direction”**. (©2014 Alan Brehm. A sermon delivered by Rev. Dr. Alan Brehm on 2/2/2014 at First Presbyterian Church of Dickinson, TX.)

Indeed, Micah showed God’s call in **verse 8, “What He requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.”** I have noted in our Adult Bible Study Class that there were and are two major competing ways of looking at what God requires in the Old Testament. One, which became the predominate Jewish tradition, was the legalistic approach. During the time of Jesus’ public ministry, the Pharisees, the Teachers of the Law, and the High Priest exemplified that view. The other approach, which Jesus fulfilled, was from the Prophetic Tradition, such as shown in Micah. **The emphasis in the Prophetic Tradition is on our Relationship with God, including how we relate to one another and all other people.** Unfortunately, we usually hear Micah’s words with Pharisaic ears – what God requires.

However, in context, “what God requires” was a reference to the Legalistic Tradition’s views, which were being contrasted by Micah and the Prophetic Tradition! That truth is more obvious, as we look at the verses preceding verse 8 in our Reading. **Micah attacked the claims of the Legalist group by asking a series of questions in verses 6-7, “What shall I bring to the Lord, the God of heaven, when I come to worship Him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to Him? Will the Lord be pleased if I bring Him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer Him my first-born child to pay for my sins?”** The popular understanding of the answer to those questions is extraordinary! The Legalists said sinners must earn God’s forgiveness and love by fulfilling the Law – doing acts of repentance – demonstrating obedience to the Old Testament Law by making the required animal sacrifices or the other burnt offerings. Unfortunately, many Christians continued to accept the need for “sinners” to earn forgiveness by acts of repentance and they projected that understanding and demand upon the Divine Parent by declaring it was an unavoidable requirement that God’s Son die for their sins, instead of their own first-born children. Even the animal sacrificing Jews did not practice sacrificing their children but somehow, that idea and belief got into the minds of some Jewish Christians, with reference to an action required of the Almighty in response to their born again contrition.

What was Micah’s response to his questions challenging the views of the Legalists about what God requires? Well, I left his answer – the first word of the next verse out of our earlier quote from verse 8. Micah’s one word answer to his sarcastic and challenging questions for the Legalists was, **“No”!** God does not require us to sacrifice animals or our children or anyone else! Does it seem a bit odd to you that Micah did that challenging through his blistering questions of the validity of the Legalists’ claims? It might, if we either forgot or disregarded God’s legal challenge against the leaders of the Jewish religious, political, and wealth elite earlier in today’s Scripture. Micah’s ridicule of

them through his questions was mild compared to what he reported as God's message in **verses 1-3**, *"Listen to the Lord's case against Israel. Arise, O Lord, and present Your case; let the mountains and the hills hear what You say. You mountains, you everlasting foundations of the earth, listen to the Lord's case! The Lord has a case against His people. He is going to bring an accusation against Israel. The Lord says, 'My people, what have I done to you? How have I been a burden to you? Answer me.'" The undergirding reality upon which God's case was based was the unfaithfulness of the religious and political leaders, the wealthy, and many of the general population with reference to their Relationship with God. They were going through the rituals, which may well have fulfilled what they considered to be the Almighty's Law, but their worship was often of false gods – those of other nations or, merely, that which they chased after – wealth, power, and the fulfillment of their physical and personal desires.*

Since Micah was speaking for the Divine Parent as a prophet, there was no actual dialogue between God and the leaders and people. The Almighty's response to their presumed silence or lack of an answer to the Lord's questions and challenge was given in **verses 4-5**, *"I brought you out of Egypt; I rescued you from slavery; I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead you. My people, remember what King Balak of Moab planned to do to you and how Balaam son of Beor answered him. Remember the things that happened on the way from the camp at Acacia to Gilgal. Remember these things and you will realize what I did in order to save you."*

That last sentence is very important! In order for God to lead us back into a Faithful Relationship with our Divine Parent, we need to realize what God has done to enable it – to save us from our self-destructive tendencies. That is why the Creator of the Universe sent the Logos made flesh – the Son of God into this world. Further, that is why it was necessary for God's Son to die for us. It was not some binding requirement of God's Law or the Almighty's revenge or demand for payment. **Instead, it was to prove to us that our Divine Parent's Agape Love and Grace has already forgiven, invited, and welcomed us into the New Faithful or Faith Relationship with God and one another. The Heavenly Parent of Jesus the Christ accomplished that by having him be the ultimate manifestation of God's Agape Love and Grace through his suffering, death on the cross, and resurrection!** It is only through that convincing Good News that followers of God's Son are able to have faith and trust in God's Agape Love, Grace, Invitation to the New Faith Relationship with the Divine Parent, and the Welcome of God. Part of experiencing and living this New Faith Relationship with God, one another, and all people, comes, as we Live the New Life in Christ – the Life of manifesting God's Agape Love and Grace – following the teachings, example, and call of Jesus Christ.

Returning to Rev. Dr. Alan Brehm, he wrote about this New Life in Christ, **"The kind of life that Jesus advocated, along with many prophets before him and after him, is a way of life that finds happiness and freedom and life through 'Seeing that justice is done, letting mercy be your first concern, and humbly obeying your God' (Mic. 6:8, CEV)." Brehm concluded, "It seems to me, if we want to find life, that's the path we need to be taking."** (©2014 Alan Brehm. A sermon delivered by Rev. Dr. Alan Brehm on 2/2/2014 at First Presbyterian Church of Dickinson, TX.)

The life we live in the New Life in Christ goes well with the prophet's message in our Scripture Reading. It is the natural result of being Agape Loved, Forgiven through Grace, Invited, and Welcomed into the New Faith Relationship with our Divine Parent. **This New Life in Christ is especially shown, as we demonstrate humble agape love, grace, invitation, and welcome toward all people or, in other words, as we walk humbly with our God.**

Jesus taught and called all of us to seek justice and to follow that humble agape loving life, as recorded in the portion of his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, which was used for today's Call To Worship. **Especially going along with our Reading from Micah is Matthew 5:5-7, "Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised! Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires: God will satisfy them fully! Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!"** So, instead of worshiping – chasing after wealth, power, and prestige, let us listen to Micah's and Jesus' call and follow Christ's example – **"Walk Humbly with God"**! Amen.