

Forever Justice

Bible Glossary, People & Places

Micah

Sermon Reference

Micah 6:8 is quoted in the sermon as one of the key scriptures emphasizing God's requirement for humans to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Importance in the Bible

Micah's prophetic teachings function as a cornerstone for the biblical understanding of justice, combining social, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Micah 6:8 encapsulates a universal ethical standard, integral to both Old and New Testament teachings on righteousness and social responsibility. His emphasis on justice to the oppressed becomes pivotal for later biblical writers and Jesus' ministry, which focused on care for the marginalized and calls for kingdom justice. Thus, Micah serves as a significant bridge linking the justice of God with the lived expression of faith among His people, underscoring the sermon's focus on God's desire for justice in this present age.

Background Context

Micah was a prophet of Judah during the late 8th century BC, contemporary to Isaiah and Hosea, who prophesied during a tumultuous period of social injustice, and moral decay in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. His prophetic ministry spanned the reigns of kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, approximately 750 to 686 BC. Micah's messages often confronted the ruling classes, condemning their exploitation of the poor, corruption, and religious hypocrisy, calling Israel and Judah to repentance and justice.

Micah's hallmark is his clear articulation of the ethical dimensions of covenant faithfulness, particularly in Micah 6:8, where he distills God's desire for His people: to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. This verse profoundly connects social ethics with spirituality, demanding active justice combined with compassionate mercy and personal humility. Micah's denunciations of the unjust practices and his hope for restoration are woven throughout his writings, reflecting God's ultimate plan for redemption amid judgment.

Historical context situates Micah as a voice for the marginalized in the face of affluent oppressors and a corrupt leadership class. His vision of justice was not merely legalistic but rooted in the well-being of the disenfranchised—the widow, the orphan, and the poor—calling the nation to align their social structures with divine righteousness. His prophetic oracles assert that honoring God cannot be divorced from ethical conduct, a

principle that resonates throughout the biblical canon. Micah's influence extends beyond his immediate context; his writings prefigure the Messianic hope, including passages that speak of a coming ruler shepherding with justice and peace (Micah 5:2-5).

His integration of judgment and hope shapes both Jewish and Christian eschatological expectation. Thus, during this sermon on justice, citing Micah 6:8 highlights the enduring biblical mandate to pursue justice not as a political or social movement alone, but as an expression of living faithfully under God's covenant.

Isaiah

Sermon Reference

Isaiah 1:17 is cited, commanding listeners to learn to do right, seek justice, defend the oppressed, support the fatherless, and plead for widows.

Importance in the Bible

Isaiah is one of the most significant prophetic voices concerning God's justice and His expectations for human conduct. His emphasis on defending the oppressed and seeking justice aligns with the broader biblical narrative highlighting God's concern for vulnerable populations. Isaiah's writings inform the New Testament's understanding of God's redemptive plan and the Messiah's role as the righteous judge and bringer of justice. By quoting Isaiah, the sermon grounds its teaching on justice firmly in the prophetic tradition, affirming the enduring biblical call to righteous action and compassion.

Background Context

Isaiah was a major prophet in the Old Testament whose ministry spanned the reigns of kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, approximately 740 to 681 BC. Isaiah's prophetic career occurred at a pivotal time when both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah faced threats from Assyrian expansion, religious syncretism, and internal corruption. His prophecies regularly addressed the spiritual and social failures of the people, calling them to repentance and emphasizing God's sovereignty and justice.

Isaiah 1 opens with a powerful indictment of Israel's rebellion against God, detailing the social injustice and moral decay that have afflicted the nation. It includes explicit commands to seek justice, defend the vulnerable, and act rightly, asserting that mere ritual observance without justice and righteousness is futile. This sets the tone for Isaiah's overarching message that true worship must be accompanied by ethical conduct, especially toward the disadvantaged sectors of society such as orphans and widows.

Isaiah's role as a prophet who intertwines the expectation of divine judgment with the promise of future restoration is seen in his missives throughout the book. He calls for social reform as a necessary condition for national survival and divine blessing. His prophecies include messianic visions where God's justice will ultimately prevail in the establishment of peace and righteousness, presaging the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.

The historical context shows Isaiah commissioned during an era when Judah had fallen away from its covenant obligations, with its leaders and people often prioritizing political alliances over faithfulness to God. His direct confrontation of these problems and his profound theological insights secure his book a central place in biblical literature. The sermon's use of Isaiah 1:17 underscores the biblical mandate for believers not only to pursue justice but to actively uphold and advocate for those unjustly treated.

Acts 6 Church Leaders (The Seven Deacons)

Sermon Reference

Acts 6 is referenced regarding a conflict between Hellenistic and Hebrew widows in the early church, leading to the appointment of seven men (often called deacons) to fairly manage distributions, thereby resolving the injustice.

Importance in the Bible

The appointment of the seven deacons in Acts 6 is critical for understanding the biblical foundation of organized ministry and social justice within the Christian community. It exemplifies how the early church took tangible steps to resolve injustice and discrimination, balancing spiritual leadership with practical administration. This passage reveals God's concern for equitable treatment, especially for marginalized groups, and provides a precedent for servant leadership and advocacy in the church. By citing this story, the sermon connects historical ecclesial practices to the ongoing call for justice-sensitive leadership today.

Background Context

Acts chapter 6 narrates a critical situation in the early Jerusalem church, around AD 30-40, in which a dispute arose between Hellenistic Jews (Greek-speaking) and Hebraic Jews (Aramaic-speaking) regarding unequal distribution of food to widows. This practical problem threatened the unity and mission of the fledgling community. The apostles, recognizing the need to focus on prayer and ministry of the Word, delegated the administrative responsibility to selected men, now known as the first deacons.

These seven men—Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus—were chosen for their reputations of being full of the Spirit and wisdom. Importantly, all seven appear to have been from the Hellenistic Jewish community, representing the minority group whose complaints initiated the dispute. This appointment not only addressed social injustice but also ensured representation and fairness within the church's caring ministries, highlighting early Christian commitment to justice and equity within communal life.

The historical significance of this event lies in its demonstration of how the early church institutionalized justice mechanisms to manage conflict and care for vulnerable members like widows, a social group often lacking resources and protection. This organizational innovation helped preserve the unity and focus of the church's mission and set a precedent for servant leadership and social justice rooted in faith communities.

Additionally, Stephen's subsequent martyrdom following his role as a deacon marks a pivotal turning point in early Christian history and witness.

The context of this passage illustrates the practical outworking of justice in communal relationships, especially when addressing systemic injustice affecting minorities. It offers a biblical model for conflict resolution, minority inclusion, and the delegation of responsibilities in faith settings. The sermon's reference to this passage encourages believers to seek wise, inclusive solutions that uphold fairness and avoid injustice in societal and church contexts.

Corrie ten Boom

Sermon Reference

Corrie ten Boom's story of forgiveness is shared, recounting her experience in Ravensbruck concentration camp and the moment she forgave a former guard who asked for her forgiveness after becoming a Christian.

Background Context

Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983) was a Dutch Christian watchmaker and evangelist who, along with her family, actively helped Jews escape the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. Their efforts led to their arrest in 1944, and Corrie and her sister Betsie were interned in the Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany, a notorious place of suffering and death. While imprisoned, Betsie died of illness. Corrie survived and later became an influential speaker and author, known especially for her book "The Hiding Place," which details her faith, trials, and forgiveness. Her life story is marked by the courage to stand against injustice—resisting the Nazi regime's persecution—and by her remarkable example of Christian forgiveness.

After the war, Corrie traveled extensively, sharing a message of hope and reconciliation. One of the most poignant moments in her ministry was her encounter with a former Ravensbruck guard who sought her forgiveness after his conversion to Christianity. Despite the deep wounds, Corrie chose forgiveness over bitterness, exemplifying Jesus' teaching to love enemies and forgive those who harm us.

Historically, Corrie's testimony illuminates the practical application of Christian forgiveness amid extreme injustices and atrocities. Her life challenges believers to confront pain and injustice without succumbing to bitterness, highlighting how forgiveness can bring personal and communal healing. Her example has inspired millions worldwide to understand forgiveness not as forgetting wrongs but as a radical, grace-filled release that reflects God's mercy.

William Wilberforce

Sermon Reference

William Wilberforce is mentioned as a historical figure who fought tirelessly in the British House of Commons for over 20 years to abolish slavery in the United Kingdom, inspired by John Newton.

Background Context

William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was a British politician, philanthropist, and evangelical Christian who became the leading figure in the movement to abolish the transatlantic slave trade in the British Empire. Elected to Parliament in 1780, Wilberforce underwent a profound Christian conversion that reshaped his life's mission. Motivated by his faith and the influence of mentors such as John Newton—a former slave trader turned Christian minister and hymn writer—Wilberforce dedicated his parliamentary career to promoting social reforms centered on justice and human dignity.

For more than two decades, Wilberforce introduced abolition bills and waged a sustained campaign against the entrenched institution of slavery, facing fierce opposition from economic and political interests that profited from the trade. His work built alliances with other abolitionists, including former slaves and religious groups, underscoring a faith-driven commitment to justice that extended beyond rhetoric into tangible political action and social change.

His efforts culminated in the passage of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which legally ended the British transatlantic slave trade. Following continued advocacy, slavery itself was abolished throughout much of the British Empire with the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, shortly before his death. Wilberforce's legacy is marked by his unwavering persistence, moral courage, and faith, illustrating how deeply held Christian convictions can shape public policy and advance justice on a global scale.

Wilberforce's historical context highlights the convergence of evangelical faith and political activism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. His life exemplifies using one's influence within existing structures to promote God-honoring justice, particularly on behalf of oppressed peoples. The sermon's reference to Wilberforce serves as an inspiring model for believers to engage in societal justice initiatives informed and empowered by biblical principles.

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