

Generosity and Justice
Micah 6:8 and other selected texts
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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When you picture an ideal world, what do you see?

Do you see people who are included...who have meaningful relationships with others who care for them?

Do you see people who have enough - who have food on their tables, access to medical care, a stable roof over their heads, meaningful work?

Do you envision opportunities available regardless of the color of one's skin, their nation of origin, their sexual orientation, their stage in life?

Do you see an environment that is clean, where trees and animals and humans can all thrive together?

Do you dream of people having a sense of safety? A sense of belonging? A world without war? Without violence?

Do you envision a world where people are rooted in love, where people know "how to feel fear without becoming cruel, how to face uncertainty without giving up, how to be human without abandoning the sacred" (Cameron Trimble, "Becoming the Grown-Ups Our Children Need" at Piloting Faith, September 8, 2025)?

What do you see?

And, what would you give...what would you offer...what would you do to help that world become a reality?

Because while we may have many people with whom we get along, with whom we have easy relationships, we do not live in a world of harmony, not within our own nation and not around the world.

Headlines are filled with stories of bombs and guns, wars not only devastating neighborhoods but also leading to famine, and places that should be safe being anything but.

Diseases once eradicated are returning. And for many, medical care is further out of reach than ever before.

While many of *us* not only have enough, but have more than enough, everyone cannot say the same thing.

While *my* pantry has more than enough food, some of which inevitably will sit there until it goes bad...while *my* closet contains clothes that I don't wear, many that I can't wear...while every driver in *my* household has a vehicle that allows them to get where they need to go and more often where they want to go...while all this is true for me and for many of you, the reality is that there are so many in our world and right here in our own community who do not have what they need to thrive, or even simply to survive.

And into this reality come the words of scripture, words that remind us that we have a responsibility in the midst of this all.

Today the refrain in our scripture reading was that familiar verse from Micah, that verse that we love, that verse that we love to love. "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?" (Micah 6:8, NRSV).

See that verse sums up our responsibility - to live in right relationship with God and with other humans, and in that relationship to work and fight for justice, for a world where people experience what is fair and right, where everyone has what they need, where the playing field is leveled so that everyone can experience what it is to thrive.

It's easy to like that idea. And we don't only like it. Many of us work for it. From serving in pantries and building houses and working on boards all with the goal of providing for those who are struggling even as we work to change systems...to standing with immigrant neighbors, bearing witness to their interactions with authorities and celebrating their traditions, ways of saying that they matter and that we value them. These and other efforts are common among us. They are ways that we are engaged in loving kindness, in doing justice, in reflecting God's heart in our living.

But did you listen to the other texts that Don shared this morning? See, while we are very familiar with Micah 6:8, we might be less familiar with these instructions to the ancient people about how to live out the justice that God hopes for.

And if we think back to those other scriptures, they included things like choosing to leave part of the harvest so that those without would have food...things like sharing a portion of what you have so that those with less may be taken care of...things like forgiving debts - not occasionally, but in a regular rhythm...things like providing what others need so that they can move ahead...things like feeding the hungry and housing the unhoused and paying attention to your neighbors.

These and other instructions remind us that we have a role to play in changing this world, in bringing about God's kin-dom right here on earth.

And if we think about the instructions that are given, then we realize they accomplish several things.

First, and most urgently, they remind us to respond to the needs of people. So, the ancient people, and we today, do things like feed the hungry and help create stable housing and fight for access to medical care.

But sometimes we forget that while this is important, it is only a starting place.

And if we really listen to scriptures like the ones we heard today, what we hear isn't just a suggestion to respond to the immediate needs of people if they present themselves, but an instruction to live in ways that help break down systems of inequality and injustice, to even live in ways that change who we are.

As we talked about these passages in Bible study recently, the participants had some insights into these texts that I think we need to hear.

Marian said, "These passages don't just demonstrate justice toward others but they protect us from lustful greediness."

Dave noticed that, "Canceling debt means someone with a lot doesn't have as much power over someone with less."

Carla reflected on the reality that, "if we really listen we might be stunned by how much conflict there is between the biblical way of living in community and the ways of our culture."

And Pam reminded us of the Native American outlook, that no one owns the land, but we are simply borrowing it from our children and grandchildren.

Often, especially as those who largely have enough or often more than enough, we can hear passages such as these being about what we can do to change things for others. And often we hear them only about what we are called to do with our abundance, with our extra, when we feel like, or when we have the time. And so we do things that are within our means, things that help others while not disrupting or challenging our way of life.

And yet, these instructions are *also* about changing ourselves...they are about aligning our living with our proclaimed values, about choosing to root our lives in right relationship with God rather than in the values of our culture, even about pushing back against the values of capitalism and individualism.

So, what if we really read these instructions with openness and curiosity?

What if we were willing to look honestly at our lives, at our excesses, at our relationship with money and stuff, with creation and neighbors?

What would the world look like if we understood everything in our lives not as something we own or control, but as a resource to use for the good of the whole and to leave for the next generation?

What would it look like for us to understand that we really are each others' keepers?

What if we wondered together how generosity and justice are connected and how a commitment to deeper generosity might shape a different world?

These are rarely easy conversations to have. And too often when we try, we feel guilty or defensive and get caught there. But, what if we dreamed together...with each other and with God...what if we dreamed God's dream of a world where everyone had enough, where everyone could thrive...and what if we lived in a way that helped make that dream a reality?

May it be so.