

“A Christian’s Job Description”

Micah 6:6 - 8 (p. 1156)

Last week Alan did a great job of setting up this week’s sermon. I love it when God comes in and intervenes in such a wonderful way. If you missed last week’s sermon, Alan preached a sermon titled “For Noble Purposes.” He talked about what God calls us to be. I couldn’t have asked for a better lead into today’s message, especially since we hadn’t really talked about what I was going to say this Sunday when Alan was preparing his sermon. You see, right now we are kind of in between sermon series. Alan is preaching on whatever he feels moved to preach on. We don’t have a cohesive plan for our sermons but we are having the Spirit move us toward sharing whatever we think the Lord would like us to share with our people here. When Alan told me over a month ago that I was going to preach this weekend I felt the Holy Spirit nudge me with this morning’s passage. It’s the same passage that I shared with Chris when I gave him his charge when we installed him here at Westminster. The great thing about this passage is that it has a much broader application than just to Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. It applies to the priesthood of all believers, and in case you don’t know, we believe that all who call upon Jesus and their Sovereign Lord and Savior are part of the priesthood. If you are here today and you are not yet a Christian, you’ll get a little glimpse into what it means to apply that title to yourself.

A couple of years ago I met a pastor from South Africa. He was in the U.S. and had visited all over, including that hallmark of American life, Disneyland. He commented that he had never seen so many overweight people in one place in his entire life. His comment to me was that living in America; it would be very easy to develop an over-realized eschatology. That is, we in America could very easily believe that we were already living in heaven with all of the opportunities and blessings that we have here. I know that there are many here today who pine for the “good old days” and feel like we are closer to hell in America than heaven. The reality is, we have it way better than most of the world. I think this has caused us here in America to become soft with our faith. Did you know that presently there are more missionaries sent TO the United States than FROM? I think this is because we have forgotten what we are supposed to be doing. We celebrate church growth by the numbers of people in worship and on our rolls and not by believer baptism. How many adults have joined our church, come here, met Jesus, and were transformed as opposed to Christians who moved here or got mad at another church? We have forgotten what God has called us to do and be. We are not much different from those in our passage this morning.

In Micah we see people trying to figure out what God has called them to do. They realize that they have strayed from the path that God had put them on and are pondering what steps they need to take in order to get back on that path and present themselves holy and acceptable in God's sight. They begin by asking if they should bring the sacrifices that are ordinary. It would be like us asking God today, what he wants from us. Should we go to church three out of four Sundays a month? Would it be a good idea to get our tithe near the ten percent mark? Would God like us to pray more often? Of course God wants these things. These are the things we should be doing all of the time. These things will not get us back on the right path with God though. The problem is that people can do all of these kinds of things without the least bit of sincerity. Think about it, how many people go to church and forget to worship the creator? How many times have you sat in worship with an attitude of "this better be good since I didn't feel like getting up this morning anyway." Or how many times have you shown up and felt like your purpose for coming here was to be fed. I'm sorry but we are way off base when we come with that attitude. Did you know that the word *worship* is supposed to be a verb and not an adjective? It's something we do, not something done to us when we show up to a service of worship. It's not about tithes or pray time and memorizing scripture. When we focus on these things we miss the mark. And by the way, that's called sin.

Next, the people propose a hyperbole. How about thousand of rams they say or ten thousand rivers of oil? The answer is, of course not. God doesn't want these things and we couldn't give them anyway. How many of you have said something to the effect that you should just chuck everything and become a missionary? Maybe we should serve on multiple committees in the church and teach Sunday school as well, all the while neglecting our families. That's what God wants. He wants some sort of extreme sacrifice. You and I know that is a lot of bull. God calls our bluff every time when we try and out holy ourselves. Whenever we present some sort of holy hyperbole I think that God just shakes his head in disappointment and disgust. We dishonor the creator and place ourselves on the throne and expect other to worship us.

The people in our passage then take their worship beyond hyperbole and into the ludicrous. They suggest offering up the lives of their firstborn. They might have been saying that they were no better than the Egyptians they had been delivered from and thus deserved the same kind of treatment from God. A more likely explanation was that they had so assimilated themselves with the culture that they were willing to take up the practice of child sacrifice to appease the Creator and buy their way back into a right relationship with God. Anyone who has gone through the grief of burying a child or who has come alongside of someone else who has gone through this knows just how awful this statement is. Yet, we know

people who so want to connect with those outside of the church that they accept anything in the name of love. They make the lame excuse that it's not their place to judge only to love and sin continues to abound. You know, Paul told the people in Corinth that people were dying because of the abundance of sin among them and their unwillingness to call anyone to accountability for their sins. Their was prejudice, sexual immorality, cheating, disrespect of the institution of the Lord's Supper and a lot of worldly things that the church refused to stand up against. We had better not so engage the world that we neglect God's standards. We cannot get so assimilated that we spend our times of worship on the soccer field or baseball diamond, the golf course or the ski runs. God does not call us to do any of those things.

So what does God put in our job description? Micah tells us that God has shown us what is good and what he requires. We are to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Did you notice that all three of these things require action? We cannot sit idly by and do nothing. We are called to be a people of action. We are supposed to be angry at the things that make God angry. We have a shelter here in Medford for abused women and it should tick us off that such a place needs to exist. We should be so moved that we do something about it. We should be upset that our society has so marginalized those with mental illness and substance abuse issues that they make up the majority of the homeless. Sure the druggies get what they deserve. They brought it upon themselves. Who are we to decide what people deserve when God loves the meth addict as much as he loves you and me? Why are we not volunteering to help at the homeless shelter or in a rehab clinic and bring the good news of the gospel to people in desperate need of it? If we really believed the Bible to be more than something that made us feel good about who we are we would do something about it. We would be doing justice and loving mercy. Instead we come here week after week whenever something more important doesn't get in the way, and go away the same people we were when we entered. There is very little transformation taking place.

Walking humbly with our God means, we put others ahead of our own needs. How many infants have we baptized in this church? How many times have you, the congregation affirmed that you would help see this children to a saving faith? Yet, how many of you play little or no part in the spiritual welfare of these same children. Why do we have to pay our young people to provide childcare, and in so doing take them out of worship and Sunday school? Some of you will say, "I already did my part." I don't remember reading anywhere in the Bible that you get to retire from your faith. I think you would be hard pressed to stand before God on judgment day and tell him that you didn't need to help other generations come to a saving faith because you "did your time." The scripture is clear that you'll still make it into heaven but, because of the refinement process you might enter heaven

smelling of smoke. We had better not leave it to someone else to do what we are all called to do. It makes God exceedingly angry to hear this kind of selfish talk from the people that he sent his Son to die for.

The Westminster Catechism says that our chief end, our job, is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. We give all sorts of excuses for not following God but *this* seems to point us directly to God. When we turn our hearts and heads away from God we are not doing our job. And by the way, did you notice that glorifying and enjoying God are tied together. It did not say the chief *ends*, but the chief *end*. That means we bring glory to God BY enjoying God. Psalm 112:1 says, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands." Paul declares in Romans 7:22, "For in my inner being I delight in God's law." Here's the great thing about this, when we do what God wants us to do, when we move toward the path that he has set for us, when we are following what is set before us in the Bible and not treating it like a fairytale that has no power over the way we live; we will find great joy. When you have joy it is made complete in expression. That is the part that brings glory to God. You are doing something. Here's the great part behind all of this action, it brings us joy. John Piper says that we are all called to be Christian hedonists. We are to be seeking that which brings us ultimate pleasure. Scripture tells us that is only found in serving God and following God's ways.

Why come to church in the first place? We can find better music elsewhere. I don't know of too many people who have a pew in their houses so they can relax and watch TV on it. How many of us who are not currently enrolled in school spend any significant amount of time being told what to believe or how to interpret something we have read? For that matter, how many of us spend more time reading magazines and the newspaper than we do the life sustaining Word of God? Isn't the Mail Tribune more relevant to our lives than scripture? There are many things we could be doing instead of going to church. We could golf, fish, hike, sleep, go out for a good meal, have coffee with friends, work on cross-stitch, mow our lawns, wash our cars, get a jump on the work week, and there are a myriad of other opportunities we could participate in, yet over 500 people show up here every Sunday. My biggest worry, and what troubles my heart the most, is that many of you are wasting your time here. If you go to church and walk out without a transformation taking place then you might as well sleep in or do something else. You are NOT living up to the job description that has been laid out for you. Micah does not say that God has shown us to listen but not act, to be fed and but not feed, to relax and not allow the Word of God to make a mark on our lives, to mess us up, to ruin us according to the world's standards. Who gives a rip about what the world's standards are anyway? Again, I don't remember scripture pointing to the world's standards as being the benchmark that gets us into heaven.

Our job is simple yet we often refuse to do it. If you call yourself a Christian, I beg of you in the name of God, not to become complacent with your faith. Live up to your job description and when it comes time to make an accounting for how well you succeeded, I want us all to hear, “Well done my good and faithful servant.”

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