

Micah 6:1-8 *“The Lord Sues His People”* February 1-3, 2020
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN

Micah 6:1-8

Listen to what the LORD says: “Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say.² “Hear, you mountains, the LORD’s accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. ³“My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. ⁴I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. ⁵My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.” ⁶With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Introduction

Have you ever been to court? Been Sued? Once I was part of a lawsuit but got kicked out of it before it ever went to court. I’ve never even been to court – not to answer a charge, not to serve as a witness, or not be a juror. I’ve visited court rooms when court was not in session but never been at a trial – except for watching Bull, Judge Judy, All Rise, Perry Mason and other court shows. Today we go to court and watch as **“The Lord Sues His People.”**

The Characters Involved

When we think of court cases we likely think of judges, juries, victims or plaintiffs, defendants, prosecutors, defense attorneys, etc. What do we have in this case? God is the judge. God is the prosecutor. Israel is defendant. This is a jury trial but the jury is unusual – the mountains, hills and everlasting foundations of the earth. The court recorder is Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah – 700’s before Christ – and a prophet of the Lord. The defendant is Israel, the people of God. Micah wrote – **“The Lord has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel (v.2b).”**

The Lord’s Complaint

Why is God suing Israel? What are the charges? The charges involved ingratitude, ungodliness, failing to reflect the Lord’s glory and love which the Lord has poured out in the lives of his people. As God unfolds his case against Israel he mentions some of the great things he had done for Israel. First, God calls to mind his gracious deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt - the ten plagues by which God persuaded Egypt to release Israel, the pillars of smoke and fire by which God guided Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness, the parting of the Red Sea, the provision of manna, quail and water.

God also said, **“I sent Moses to lead you, also Miriam and Aaron.”** Moses was the human leader of Israel and a prophet of God. Aaron was Moses’ brother and the first high priest of Israel. Miriam was their sister who helped and encouraged them. They were God’s appointed leaders for Israel.

God also calls to mind what he did for the Israelites in the days of Balaam and Balak as the Israelites move toward the Promised Land of Canaan. Balak was the king of Moab and an enemy of Israel. He wanted to wipe out Israel. To ensure his nation’s victory, Balak called on Balaam, a false prophet to curse Israel so that Balak could defeat them.. God wouldn’t allow Balaam to do so. He commanded Balaam to bless Israel. Balam did. Israel won the battle.

God also said, ***“Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgah.”*** As God brought the Israelites into Canaan, the Promised Land, God was with them even parting the water of the Jordan River to allow the Israelites to cross.

Why does God recall these events that occurred hundreds of years before Micah’s day? It was because of these events that Israel was Israel and the Jews were the people of God. They were examples of how God blessed Israel. God was showing his people that they had no reason to act the way they were.

You see, in spite of the goodness of God, many Israelites worshipped false gods. They lived for and loved pleasure more than God. They were dishonest, lacking in love, inconsiderate, unkind and self-centered. They, by their attitude and actions, showed ungratefulness, rebellion and little love for God or humans. God was making them realize their wrong through this trial.

As we picture the trial and ponder God’s suit against his people we should ask ourselves, “Could this just as well be us on trial?” God certainly has done marvelous things for us. God created us. He has materially blessed us. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, lived to fulfill God’s law for us and died on the cross to suffer our deserved curse for sin, has delivered us from everlasting despair and damnation. God has given his word to reveal his love to us and guide us in love for him. He brought us to faith through his Spirit. We enjoy forgiveness. We have righteousness from God. He has given us a fellowship of believers. God strengthens and guides us in life. When there are the difficult rivers of life to cross, God gets us across them, narrowing the water, slowing the currents, or lessening the depths.

But don’t we find ingratitude, rebellion, self-centeredness, idolatry, and a lack of love in our lives? We let things we enjoy rob God of worship, service and fellowship he desires and enjoys. “Thy will be done” becomes “my will be done.” Congregational worship gives way to self-centered work, sleep, or play. We may be champs in supporting personal enjoyment but chumps in supporting gospel ministry or charity.

I can’t speak for you. But the Lord could make a case against me like he did against Israel. He could indict, convict, and condemn me of ingratitude and be justified when he judges. How about you?

Settlement

In lawsuits sometimes when parties being sued realize the case against them is solid they could lose big-time; they want to settle. Micah speaks for Israel and expresses what they generally will think. “What do I need to do get on the Judge’s good side?” ***“With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings and with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my first-born for my transgression, the first of my body for the sin of my soul?”*** Burnt offerings and thank offerings were god-pleasing if offered with the sincerity, love, and faith in God. But offering children was wicked. This was something the pagans did. It was murder. It shows how morally low Israel was sinking. They offered to buy God’s favor.

Sometimes people ignorant of God’s word act the same way. To make up for bad before God they will do some good, give some offerings, or provide some service. Or, “I’ll deny myself and God will be pleased with me and forgive me.” But like people of Micah’s day, the thinking is faulty. People can’t buy God’s favor or forgiveness. As Isaiah wrote, ***“All our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Is64:6).”***

So how do sinners settle with God? We can’t. The wonderful thing is that God settled with his people. God, the judge in this case, laid Israel’s and our guilt and condemnation on his Son, Jesus. Jesus took our debt and carried to the cross. There he suffered ...there he died ... there he settled what we owe God for

not loving, thanking, praising, and obeying as he wants. In Micah 7 the prophet asks, ***“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgiveness the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance. You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You again will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea (7:18,19).”*** The greatest ocean depths in the world are in the eastern Pacific Ocean – over 36,000 ft. deep. If you’re on a ship and accidentally drop a camera over the side, you will never find it. It’s too deep. Because of Jesus, Micah says that what happened with our sins. Jesus took care of the settlement.

Considerations

But as in earthly settlements to earthly lawsuits there are some considerations that are to be observed, as God has settled the debt of our sin there are considerations that he wanted from the Israelites and expects of us – expressions of thanks. God wanted his people and us to turn from their ways. God wants us to walk in his ways. Micah wrote, ***“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”***

One is ***“to act justly.”*** This is to do what is right in God’s eyes. Putting it another way, to strive out of love for and faith in God to try to keep the Ten commandments. We can never do this perfectly. But it sure pleases God and shows gratitude to him when we try. Our godly lives give God glory and are a big “THANK YOU” for his goodness and grace.

Another consideration is ***“to love mercy.”*** This is showing Christian love. It pleases and glorifies God when our greatest love is for him. But it pleases God when from our love for him, flows love for others. This is love that shows itself in concern for their spiritual and physical welfare. To love mercy means being generous to those in need. It means forgiving those who offend us because God has forgiven us who offended him. It means showing compassion to those who are weak – visiting the sick and shut-in; encouraging those who are straying or erring in their faith; or comforting the sorrowful. Our love of mercy gives God glory and is a big “THANK YOU” to God.

The third consideration is ***“to walk humbly with your God.”*** How do we do this? First we need to remember that God is our Creator and we are his creatures; the Lord is our Redeemer and we are his redeemed; we are but dust and ashes; any good in us is the result of the Lord’s goodness to us. The person who walks humbly with the Lord strives to submit to the Lord’s love and the Lord’s law. To humbly walk with the Lord is to receive what we think of as the good and bad in life trusting that the Lord will work good from everything and as he does he will bless and keep us. To walk humbly with the Lord is to daily worship him as Lord and to live to his glory. It means to believe what God says even if it goes beyond our comprehension or is outside the bounds of contemporary fashion.

Conclusion

I never told you what happened in the lawsuit I mentioned at the beginning. I didn’t get sued. A judge ruled that State law said that only if a state worker was guilty of criminal negligence could he or she be included in a lawsuit. So, the judge excluded me and my boss – case dismissed for us!

Through his Son God excluded you from liability for sin. Jesus has paid for your sin. God has tossed your case out of court. You have reason to be thankful. Show that thanks. Act justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly with your God. (DRS)