

Your Justice, My Justice, God's Justice

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"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)

All of us have our favorite Bible passages. Many people like John 3:16 and Psalm 23. Lutherans especially like Ephesians 2:8-10. (Note: I am intentionally not writing out the full verses. I encourage you to look them up yourselves!)

All of the verses in the Bible can't possibly hold equal weight when compared to each other. Compare Leviticus 24:14 with John 8:7. All of us have a "canon within the canon." We all have Bible passages that more fully express our Christian faith and our sense of how we see ourselves and the world. Martin Luther especially liked to view scripture through the lens of Christ. "Was Christum treibt," was his saying in German, which basically means, "What conveys Christ."

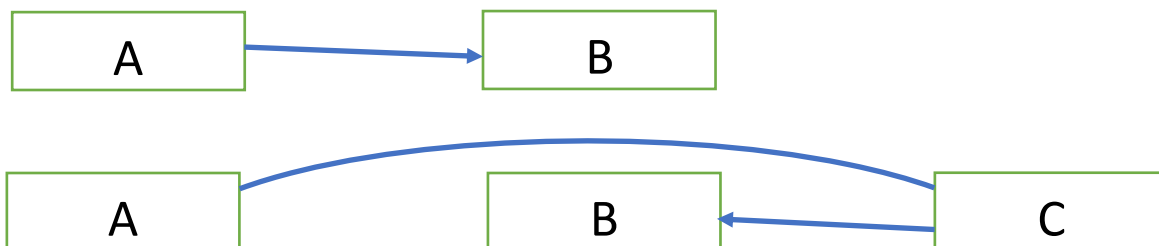
Micah 6:8 is a passage that seems popular today in many religious circles, even among non-Christians. It is an ancient text dating back to the prophet Micah of the 8th century BCE during a time of religious and political unrest. What is new about that? It's pretty amazing to see the resonance of this verse today. I, along with many, would consider Micah 6:8 to be part of my "canon with the canon," one of my seminal verses from the Bible. My *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd edition from 2001, has the following footnote on this passage: "In this single sentence the prophet sums up a century of brilliant prophesy." Wow, that's some high praise for a single verse of scripture!

I see within the simple structure of this single verse, three foundational pillars:

1. Do Justice
2. Love Kindness
3. Walk Humbly with God

Who doesn't want more justice in the world? Well, maybe not everyone, especially when pursuit of justice could affect my own status in what I might perceive as deleterious to me. Whose justice shall we act upon? My sense of justice? Your sense of justice? Or God's sense of justice? What system or course of action can best achieve the most justice for the most people for the longest time? Debating these questions is what causes division and confusion. But it can also move us down the path to God's justice. It seems to me that we have to ask these questions and we do well to acknowledge the complexity of the paths to justice.

Perhaps, **my sense of justice** in a given situation will go directly from point A to point B. While **your sense of justice** will go from point A to point C, then finally to point B. A state of justice is reached, but a different route is taken to get there.



I propose we view these 3 pillars as equally integral parts of a 3-legged stool. All are important in maintaining the balance of the stool and for God's justice to be realized.

- If I only pursue justice on my terms without kindness and humility, I risk being "right" and needlessly damaging people in the pursuit of my goal.
- If I only seek to be kind without humbly seeking justice, I can become very irrelevant to real life circumstances.
- If I only seek humility without pursuing justice with kindness, I can give away any sense of my agency to make the world a better place.

Holding these 3 foundational pillars (justice, kindness, humility) are integral in dealing with our real-world challenges. Thanks be to God that it is God's justice that is ultimately at stake. I don't have a perfect sense of God's justice and neither do you. Let's keep this in mind as we deal with not only the challenging issues of our time, but also in dealing in a more humane and godly manner with each other as together we seek God's justice to be done on earth as it is in heaven!

