

The Worship God Wants – Micah 6:6-8

USBC - 5th July 2009

1. Introduction

- Try preaching on Micah 5:8!!
- I was asked to preach on this as it's about the worship God wants. And actually, that's been really helpful for me – but it hasn't had so much to do with what we refer to as 'worship'.

2. Micah

- So, who was Micah?
- A prophet in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah in the Southern kingdom, Judah.
- A contemporary of Isaiah, but whereas Isaiah was part of the ruling classes, Micah was a humble farm worker.
- And in the country there was lots going on that really displeased God. The main power at the time was the Assyrian empire and King Ahaz had completely subjected himself and the nation to this foreign power. He encouraged the worship of their gods.
- What outraged Micah from his position on the ground was some of the sheer inequality, exploitation and injustice that was going on:
 - 2:2 – Covet fields and houses and take them
 - 2:2 – Defrauding
 - Prophets telling people only what they want to hear, prophesying for food and drink
 - 3:11 – Judges taking bribes
 - 6:10-12 – Dishonest and deceitful
- Against this backdrop, Micah points out that their religious observances are worse than useless while they continue to live in this way.

3. Micah 6:6-8

- v6: What shall I bring God as worship?
 - v6-7: burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

- Thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil?
- Shall I offer my first born?
- Extravagant, over the top...boastful even?
- v.8:

'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.'

- Actually, it's your lives and actions that determine your worship. That is the worship God really wants.
- And actually, this links in to loads of other passages in the OT and NT.
 - **Gen 4:4b:** *'The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour.'*
 - **Isa 1:11:** *'The multitude of your sacrifices – what are they to me? Says the LORD... v16: 'Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow.'*
 - **Amos 5:21-24:** *'I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never ending stream!'*
 - **Matt 9:13:** *'But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'*
 - **James 2:14-17:** *'What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed" but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'*
- A rich vein, in both OT and NT that says that God isn't interested in us just professing faith. True worship is when it impacts the way we live our lives – and frequently that's expressed in care for the poor, weak, sick and

marginalised.

- So, to the people Micah was talking to / about, going to the synagogue and offering sacrifices was a waste of time if they continued to live lives that were totally opposed to God's character.

4. The Application for Us

- A Life Well Lived

- So firstly God simply calls for integrity. That our lives match up to our words.
- But in many of these passages there's a sense that maybe we're being called to be more proactive than that. We believe in an all-powerful God. Of justice and and hope and joy. And we have a faith of freedom.
- But I have to ask myself, what practical benefits do my colleagues, my neighbours see from my faith? What benefits does Swindon see from its churches?
- I know there are many things that people are involved in – ways they're making a real difference to their community and in our time of sharing it would be great if you could share with us what you do, how your faith influences you (if at all) and if the team you work with has any needs that maybe others of us could help with.
 - Foodbank, Willows, Parish Council, School Governor / PTA
- Blessed to be a blessing.
- Just to ask us all a question – if we believe this passage and the other passages we've explored are true, is it enough for us to bring just our worship to church on a Sunday? Does our faith impact the rest of the week so that we're living out these truths? Not going to elaborate any further – for each of us to think about and address – Zan & I especially so don't want to preach, don't have the answers yet.

- Worship in Church

- In church we've been having a discussion about worship and about how we worship. And a concern that maybe we've lost the heart of worship. Maybe our words have been a bit flat?
- A/ my response has been to look at form. Change this or that service to create a better worship experience. And there's nothing wrong in that, but perhaps I've missed the point.

- Maybe the message of this passage for us as a church is, don't let your religion become your religion. Don't let the pursuit of a 'perfect' worship experience, however well intentioned, become the main thing.
- I've heard it said that worship is just an outward expression of an inner reality. Perhaps to get back to the heart of worship all we need to concern ourselves with is living these lives of worship. In engaging with our communities so we need to rely on God. As we see him at work in and through us so we'll naturally want to worship and it'll spring up from us.
- Walking with God
 - What a great image in v8. What does the LORD require of you...to walk humbly with your God. Like Eden. Not called to cower, to beg to plead, to get every last thing just right. But to spend every day, our whole lives walking with God in fellowship.