

SERMON: "faith in ACT!ON: LIVE JUSTLY"

Rev. Geoff Ross, Sunday, April 25, 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Today we launch our annual faith in ACT!ON campaign through which we go out beyond our walls/put our faith into action as we serve our community. I'm excited by the new ways our fiA Team has come up with so we can reach out to our neighbours/community with our COVID-friendly Service Projects. This year's campaign – entitled LIVE JUSTLY – is based on one of the bedrock passages of the entire Bible, if not of our faith – Micah 6:8 – which, with absolute clarity, reiterates/distills what God expects of us in how we are to live and act out our faith.

[Background: Micah 6:8-a repeat of Moses' telling of the essence of God's law in Deuteronomy 10: "so now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."(Deut 10:12) Sound familiar? It should. It's half of what Jesus called the greatest commandment: "to love God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind and strength."(Mark 12:30) "Doing justice/loving kindness/walking humbly with God":Clearly important to God....]

But, as important as the Micah passage is for our understanding of how we are called by God to live our lives – it is often observed only in Spirit/not in practice; read aloud in here but not lived out out there. All you have to do is look around to know that this is, sadly, true: it's clear we've blurred the line between justice/vengeance, we haven't done well with the loving kindness (mercy)/walking humbly with God parts either. So, what does God require of us? What would/does it take to LIVE JUSTLY?

It's a simple question; the answer, however, is less so if we take our faith seriously. The question, asked by God, challenges us to live a life of faith – a faith in action – that goes beyond mere attendance/prayer/even belief. Luckily, God answers the question Himself, revealing the full extent of His expectations:God wants nothing less than everything – a total life commitment to do His will that starts by living a faith that isn't expressed through words, but by actions – "***doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God***" – actions that, done together, will bring about the kingdom of God.

[NOTE:Must be clear – what exactly is God calling us to put into practice?Live out faith/actions as signs of our love for God/neighbours. Gospel isn't simply for us/it's to transform society/world! But WE must take it outside/into the world – in ways that transform/effect change. To LIVE JUSTLY, we are to put the ACT!ON into our faith!]

To be clear:the Gospel – the Good News – is good news; but it isn't some sugar-coated panacea that makes us feel good while we ignore it's true/real implications on/for us/communities/world:it is an aggressive prescription that preaches a fundamental inversion of how the/this world operates. The Gospel is God's gift to/for us/our salvation/the redemption of all of creation, it's not about us – but we are called/commissioned to be God's witnesses/ambassadors/exemplifiers to/for/His saving grace/love/plan. To do this we must both live up to what is expected/required of us by living justly through our words AND actions. But, to do this we need to be clear eyed about the Gospel and its requirement/expectations/cost/meaning on/of/for/to us – as individuals/congregation/community of faith.

[MUST: Move faith from head-heart-hands&feet! Faith is an action: we're to DO justice-every act/deed/thing; LOVE kindness/mercy-with whole heart/mind/body/soul; WALK humbly/humility-by putting God's/Jesus' goals/criteria/requirements first/ahead of ours/worlds. LIVE JUSTLY means: "walk the walk"/"Live out faith" – means: becoming Christ to/in the world.]

In the Luke 4 reading we hear Jesus proclaim what the disciples/apostles/leaders of the Acts 2 Church in Jerusalem knew: that there were implications for how we're to live our lives of faith; that there are great, God-sized expectations placed on the Church/us/me/you. The Church is called to live out its faith/live up to the challenge of Micah 6:8 by putting its faith into action; not by showing favouritism/avoiding the plight of the poor and sick/ignoring the hunger/imprisoned/lost and dying – by not taking the side of comfort/choosing safety over service. The Matthew 25 reading of the Judgement of the Nations serves as a sobering reminder of how much more we have to do – and what the costs are if we fail to rise to the call to LIVE JUSTLY.

Friends, even in the midst of a/more so because of the pandemic, God longs for us to LIVE JUSTLY, and for our faith to be active/a sign of our willingness to do what He requires of us. The challenge of Micah 6:8 speaks directly who we claim to be – it challenges us to stand/serve as a people of faith, as individuals/community: it calls us out – literally/figuratively/physically – to put our faith into ACTION. Are you ready? Are you ready to take up the challenge/to do what the Lord requires of you/ready to LIVE JUSTLY/to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly? I hope your answer will be "yes!" Amen.