072325

1. My Notes … WWC message 7/26
2. Series: When Justice Meets Love
   * Title: Truth Matters
   * Text: Micah 6:8 (and other various passages)
   * Quote: “The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling.” — Tim Keller (Pastor, Author)
3. Introduction
   * For the last several weeks the thought that “truth matters” has been echoing in my head. It took me so far as to begin to read 2 books about the subject … Truth Matters by Andreas Kostenberger. Darrell Bock and Josh Chatraw (2014) and Excellence (2011) which is also by Andreas Kostenberger. I know that this is the beginning of a journey for me, and I get to include you in the first steps. This notion of truth matters, of it being important, flowed from where we have been in our Tuesday Bible Studies and our Saturday sermon series. So, there will be a lot of references to the ground we have covered.
   * My thoughts go back to a conversation that Jesus was having with the people during the Festival of Shelters. It involved both the Pharisees and those that were looking for the Messiah. Jesus was being challenged for His claims of authority and who He said He was. Jesus told those who were looking at Him as the Messiah, *“… You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. 32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* **(John 8:31-32 NLT).** Jesus is making is clear that discipleship is seen in obedience. It’s not just knowing His teaching but living them. Our actions reveal who and what we believe. And a lifestyle of obedience to what Jesus said is freeing. In other words, there is purpose, peace, and joy no matter what is happening around us.
   * Truth and freedom are ideals everyone is searching for. I will say it first (and probably say it again) … Truth and Freedom are found in Jesus Christ. Anywhere else you look isn’t going to get you the answer for which you are searching. Think about what was going on when Jesus said this … (here is a hint – it isn’t much different today). The Jews were being ruled by Rome. This political and governmental pressure was always evident. There were soldiers, governors, and a variety of hierarchy making and trying to enforce rules that were often at the whim of any Roman around. The Jews wanted to live their way, by their standards, and follow their leaders. The Messiah was supposed to do this for them – enforce the Jewish way of life. Jesus came with a bigger purpose. Real freedom isn’t political in nature; it isn’t a bigger army to enforce your rules over others. Real freedom comes from being able to trust and choose a lifestyle that honors the Lord. Real freedom allows you to experience peace and joy despite what may be going on around you. Free will, the ability to choose whatever you want, is a topic of debate recently. The thought is being proposed that there isn’t any real freedom or free will. We are a product of our environment and only react to the stimulus around us. Even this discussion is dispelled by Jesus. The freedom that a believer in Jesus Christ has is freedom from the bondage and penalty of sin. This freedom comes from a relationship with Him as Lord and Savior. It releases us from the habitual lawlessness that surrounds our human nature. My way is not the “right way” … God’s is.
   * People are trying to find any way to live forever, to have meaning, and satisfy their wants. Anyone who chooses to believe that Jesus is Lord and trust Him with their lives finds real love. This love shows us what freedom is.
   * **Galatians 5:13-14 NCV:** *13 My brothers and sisters, God called you to be free, but do not use your freedom as an excuse to do what pleases your sinful self. Serve each other with love. 14 The whole law is made complete in this one command: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.*
   * Just a note here … there will be a lot of Scripture references – some we will read, others only identify.
4. Conviction and Compassion
   * On Tuesday nights, we have been talking about who God is by looking at His attributes. It’s all based on His love for us. I’m jumping into this understanding of truth and how it applies to our lives by going over something we have recently discussed.
   * **1 John 3:11,14 NET**

*3:11 For this is the gospel message that you have heard from the beginning: that we should love one another … 3:14 We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our fellow Christians. The one who does not love remains in death.*

* + The Good News is a message of love. It’s love that is transformative to every individual. Politics and governments bring systemic change, but the individual gets lost. In God’s economy, it is about a personal relationship. The message that Jesus brought, the message that the Disciples continued to teach, was one of grace and truth that touched us all on a personal level.
  + John wrote to the church (that’s all of us) that God’s love for us has been the message from the beginning. It is seen in the tension that arises in each of us between conviction and compassion – we might feel guilt or unworthiness because of our flaws and faults (sin) but kindness of God revealed what real forgiveness looks like. Justice and love meet in the person of Jesus Christ. He loved us so much that He bore the burden of our sin so that we might pass from death to life – even today.
  + Love equal life … the absence of love (hatred, apathy) equals death. This is not just a commentary on life today, but it is a spiritual principle we must live by. The need for justice comes from a deep-seated desire for fairness and order, at least that’s the way most see it. God’s justice meets the requirement that all sins be dealt with by His standards. This is difficult for many to understand because justice has come to mean doing what is fair or right in the eyes of society. God’s standards, His ways, are not our ways … God’s justice shows us the seriousness of sin. His love brings transformation to the sinner. Love is not a step in the process; it is the process. Love is something we begin with and grow deeper into.
  + I’m not just talking about emotions and feelings – these are part of love. But love is an action word, one that moves toward others even when it isn’t easy, comfortable, or costly. Love is sacrifice; love is service (ministry).

1. Love Defined
   * **1 John 3:16-18 CSB**

*16 This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If anyone has this world’s goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God’s love reside in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.*

* + John is reminding us that we know love because it was love that was demonstrated by the choice Jesus made to go the Cross. The writer of Hebrews reinforces this thought – *“… keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* **(Hebrews 12:2 CSB).** Jesus chose obedience, He did it with joy. Actions testify.
  + God’s justice demanded payment, and He made the payment Himself. This goes back to the covenant that God made with Abraham (Genesis 15). God made a covenant (pledge, promise) with Abraham and sealed it with the blood of animals. In essence, God was saying, “May this be done to me if I don’t keep my oath…” (see Jeremiah 34:18-19 about oath making). For us to find a proper relationship with the Lord God our sin debt had to be resolved. That way restoration could take place. The problem became if we died in our sins we would be eternally separated from God. Because of God’s great love for us (His creation), the debt was paid by the Lord Himself (see Ephesians 2:4-6).
  + The Cross was the place where Justice and Love met face to face. Sin wasn’t excused; the debt was paid in full because of God’s love. According to John, this is how we are to love others. Allowing justice and mercy to meet without compromise.

1. Our Requirement
   * There are some great lessons throughout Scripture that we can apply to our lives. In fact, there are several places that we are told that God wants us to choose obedience over choosing to sacrifice (see 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16; Hosea 6:6; Romans 6:16).
   * I know of 2 places in Scripture where we are told what the Lord God requires of us. One is Deuteronomy 10:12-13 and the other I’m going to read to you and talk about for a moment.
   * **Micah 6:8 AMP**

*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, and to love kindness and mercy, and to humble yourself and walk humbly with your God?*

* + The first thing to understand is that God is making the path clear. He has “shown” us – many translations say “told” us. There is no doubt about the expectation for believers here.
  + To do justly - This means living in a way that is fair and honest. It’s about ensuring our actions reflect fairness and integrity, both in our personal dealings and in our broader social responsibilities. Additionally, it means that we have integrity in our relationship with Jesus Christ – that we trust Him and follow His words.
  + To love kindness and mercy – compassion, kindness, caring … it’s what the world needs now, more than ever. It comes from knowing who God it and believing that He loved us first. And it grows from there.
  + To humble yourself and walk humbly with your God – I think that Max Lucado said it best, “God does not exist to make a big deal out of us. We exist to make a big deal out of him. It’s not about you. It’s not about me. It’s all about him.” (It’s Not About Me … 2011). I like to think of it this way … love is what justice sees but doesn’t walk away from. The message is seen in other scriptures. For instance, Amos 5:24 calls for justice to “roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.” Similarly, Jesus speaks about mercy in the Beatitudes **(Matthew 5:7 CSB),** *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”* Walking humbly with God is the message that Solomon taught us in Proverbs 3:5-6, which advises us to trust in the Lord and not lean on our own understanding.

The verse serves as a reminder that our actions reflect our faith, and it is more than rituals; it’s about living out God's love every day. The words of the Prophet challenged Israel, and they challenge us. It is about reflecting our faith in practical ways. Justice, mercy, and humility should be the song we continue to sing.

1. Wrapping Up
   * Justice and Mercy are not optional. The Scripture in the book of Micah frames justice and mercy as requirements, not suggestions. In Matthew, Jesus intensifies this by calling them weightier—more central than ritual precision. **Matthew 23:23** states, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.”* **(LSB).** Both Scriptures affirm that God’s heart beats for justice expressed through mercy.
   * It shows the danger of doing things man’s way instead of God’s. The Pharisees chose to substitute meticulous tithing for moral responsibility. Jesus doesn’t dismiss tithing but insists that justice and mercy are primary. Micah similarly warns against empty rituals divorced from ethical living. Micah’s call to “walk humbly” contrasts sharply with the prideful posture of the Pharisees. True justice and mercy flow from a heart that knows its place before God—not from performance, but from presence.
   * The choice is yours … what kind of example are you choosing to be?
   * Let’s Pray
   * Grace First, Grace Always