

INTRODUCTION. Micah is one of the neglected books of the Bible! Micah is **complicated** - he is difficult to **follow** as he appears to jump from one subject to another - this may be because there were **several** prophecies given to Micah at **different** times, rather than all at once. Micah I suspect is **mostly known** for this one verse which is our text! But he has **one overall concern** amongst his prophecies. He is addressing **one particular sin** in Israel and Judah. Sin of **injustice!**

**Most of us** think of justice in terms of **Court Cases** which **fail** to convict real criminals, and cases which convict **innocents!** And of course, that is **unjust!** But in God/Jesus's mind, justice means something **much more** than wrong decisions at Court level!

Justice means '**caring for the vulnerable**' - **giving the vulnerable what is just!** Caring that **proceeds** from a **heart filled** with the **love of God**. Our text reads *to do justice and to love kindness* - those who know Hebrew better than I say this is **not** two different things. It means doing justice **out of heart** filled with the love of God. The **two words** are 'mishpat' and 'chesedh'. 'Mishpat' refers to the **action**, the doing, and 'chesedh' refers to the **attitude** which **motivated** the doing! Many commentators say there is **one object** here, not two - we are called 'to do justice' **out of Godly steadfast love!** As apostle Paul: *The aim of our charge is love THAT ISSUES FROM a pure heart* [1Tim1:5] 'To walk with God, then, we must **practise justice out of merciful love**'. This is what **God requires** of us! Our **faith**, must **LEAD** to action! James got it right, *faith without works is dead*

There is **another word** in the Bible translated just/justice-'**tzadique**' Righteousness or justice. In the Bible to be righteous means you **do righteous** things, you **do justice**. To be righteous, '**tzadique**', is to **live** righteously in **all** of our relationships, at home, at work, in the community. 'Mishpat' and 'tzadique' are very often **used together** and are **interchangeable** *Thus says the LORD: 'Keep justice, and do righteousness'* [Isa 56:1] *I will raise up for David a righteous Branch and He shall...execute justice* ('mishpat') *and righteousness* ('tzadique') *in the land* [Jer 23:5]

‘Mishpat’ means **dealing fairly! Equally!** The one offence, receives the same penalty - **no matter who** is guilty! In Thur’s Courier, a TV executive escaped jail having been guilty **for the 3rd time**, of drunk-driving, on 2.5 times limit! All because he had an **important job!** A lesser victim would have been jailed!! **Injustice!** We all agree! **\*\*But** ‘mishpat’ in the Bible **includes MORE than** being fair/equitable. It **ALSO** means **providing** for the **vulnerable**, the poor/alien/widow/orphan. ‘Mishpat’/justice means **attending** to the **unfortunate!**

**Tim Keller:** “Over and over again, mishpat describes taking up the care and cause of widows, orphans, immigrants and the poor - those who have been called ‘the quartet of the vulnerable’ ”! Isaiah who ministered at the same time as Micah: *seek **justice mishpat**, correct/relieve **oppression**; bring **justice** to the **fatherless**, plead the **widow’s** cause [Isa 1:17]* + this is the fast I have chosen to ***loose the bonds of wickedness to **undo the straps of the yoke**, to let the **oppressed** go **free**...to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless **poor** into your house [Isa 58:6cf]*** This is something **God wants!** **Amazing** - but this is what **God is all about** - and **Xnity is about!!!**

Giving **support** to the vulnerable **reflects** the heart of God! One of the **chief characteristics** of God is His **heart** for the **unfortunate** and the **vulnerable**. Listen to Him: ***Defend the poor and fatherless; do **justice** to the afflicted and needy [Psa 82:3AV]*** Tim Keller who travels about wears many ‘hats’, says that he is always introduced as the minister of Redeemer Church in **Times Square, Manhattan** because that is where most of his work and time is spent! He is **best known** as the minister of Redeemer Church. And so the Biblical prophets do the same in introduction God - they **define** Him as the ***Father of the fatherless and protector of widows...settling the solitary in a home [Psa 68:5]*** - because **that** is God’s true character and it is where his heart is and who He cares for most!

We are called to **shout for joy** and to sing a new song to God because *He loves **righteousness** (‘tzadique’) and **justice** (‘mishpat’) the earth is **full** of the steadfast love of the Lord [Psa 33:5]*. God’s great work is providing for the needy and the vulnerable.

**Job** amazes me! A Godly man with great **insights!** *in my flesh I shall see God + I have found a **ransom!*** Note how he **defines** what being **righteous** is! Job says God ‘shined’ on him ***because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him...I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy*** [Job 29:12cf] Francis I Anderson says [Job 31:13-38] is one of the most important passages in Bible because it shows how a righteous person is supposed to live! To **deny** justice, someone’s rights/needs when we can fulfill it is **unrighteous!** *if I have **rejected** the **cause** of my manservant or my maidservant...If I have **withheld anything** that the **poor** desired, or caused the eyes of the **widow** to fail...or if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing...I could **not** have faced **His majesty***[Job 31:13cf]

This is **not OT stuff!** Remember John: *if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet **closes his heart** against him, how does God’s love abide in him?* James brother of X says the same: *If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’ **without giving them** the things needed for the body, what good is that?* [Jam 2:15] **Failing** to give to those in need, is a great sin with God! How would **you define** real religion? What does the **Bible** say is real religion? Let X’s brother: *Religion that is **pure and undefiled...to visit orphans and widows in their affliction*** [Jam 1:27] My friends we **must** be **righteous** The **Lord is righteous and He loves righteous deeds** [Psa 11:7] and we are told that we will not enter heaven if we are not righteous *nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false* [Rev 21:17] The parable of **Good Samaritan** is actually about Levite/Priest **failing!**

Again in NT, **Jesus** tells us **who** the righteous are at Judgment Day!! *Then the **righteous** will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you **hungry** and feed you, or **thirsty** and give you drink?...a **stranger** ...in **prison**....or **naked** or **sick**... [Mat 25:37cf]* Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, *when you give to the **needy** - that is **practicing your righteousness!***[Mat 6:1] His point in the Sermon is: ‘Don’t do these things before men **to be seen** by them’ - **but** we learn from Him what **practicing righteousness** actually is! **\*\*What is my**

point tonight? Why am I telling you all this? Where is **faith** in all this? Is this not the **law**? I am saying that remembering the poor and needy is an **EXPRESSION** of our **FAITH** in Jesus Christ! Doing these things is the **FRUIT** of faith. There is such a thing as *the OBEDIENCE of faith* [Rom16:26] *Faith without works is dead!*

I know it can be 'dangerous' to **emphasise** this because people can start doing good things to the poor **in order** to get to heaven - but the Bible tells us clearly that we are 'saved **to serve!** The fruit of faith is serving and glorifying God. If your faith does not move you to have mercy and compassion on the poor the Bible says your faith is dead, it is worth nothing! Yes, this is a hard saying - it is only those with the grace of God who can do this! \*Of course the vital point is, as we have it in our text, is that our good deeds **must come from** a heart that has been purified by the grace of God and is filled with steadfast love and mercy! Peter: *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth...love one another earnestly from a pure heart* [1Pe1:22]

How did Jesus **confirm** to John Baptist that He was truly the Messiah? *Go and tell John what you hear and see, the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed...the poor have good news preached to them* [Mat 11:4cf] These 'good works' were to be **confirmation** to John that Jesus was truly the Messiah!

This, I believe more and more, is **WHY** Jesus Christ got such a large following - and others do not! **APP** As a congregation we give a little to the **homeless and other Charities** - we must **NEVER STOP!** If we stop giving to the needy, we have stopped being a Church!

Maybe we ought to **give more** than we do - not simply so that we might grow in numbers as a congregation - but because it will **please our Father in heaven.** It will **better reflect the image of Christ!** Remember Jesus was called **Suffering SERVANT** because He served others! Indeed He was God's **RIGHTEOUS (tzadique) SERVANT** [Isa 53:11] Solemn to read *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...for their deeds follow them* - right into heaven!![Rev 14:13] Serving others is a **humble work!** God did many things to His people Israel - that 'He might **humble them!**' Beautiful humility!