

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church of
Watertown, WI
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
4th Sunday after the Epiphany (series
A.)
February 2, 2014 Micah 6:6 to 8**



⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, 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.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in Hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I read this week about a man named Josh – a man who used to play professional football. About 3 weeks before Christmas – 2012 Josh was at a party where there was a lot of drinking. Josh is a pretty big guy – but even so the equivalent of 17 drinks in one night was too much. Certainly too much to drink and then go driving. But that’s exactly what Josh did. He drove home at speeds estimated up to 134 miles per hour in a 45 mph zone – when he crashed his very fancy Mercedes – and killed his teammate Jerry! I have said before – I don’t understand exactly how they decide what is a fair punishment for being so drunk you crash your car and someone else dies! The punishment Josh received? 180 days in jail – 6 months – 1/2 a year! That’s it! Go to jail the first of this year – and you are out before the 4th of July! I don’t get that! I don’t understand how someone is dead – and you are home to watch the fireworks on the 4th of July! It doesn’t seem fair – and so? I was a pretty little person – when I complained bitterly to my earthly father – that something was just *not fair!* And I remember still today my dad said, “Son, life isn’t fair. Get used to it!” Today God’s Word talks about life – earthly physical life and eternal life. Today God’s Word reminds us – what is life about?

Walk Humbly Beside Jesus! When we do we will

II. II. Show Mercy

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – from the scroll of the prophet Micah! The People's Bible Commentary on Obadiah, Jonah and Micah was written by Prof. Cyril Spaude. Prof. Spaude was exceedingly gifted – able to teach Greek and at the same time – to know Hebrew well enough to write a commentary about an Old Testament prophet, too. Prof. Spaude wrote that the scroll of the prophet – 7 chapters is a sermon written down. Micah is 3 prophetic messages – each beginning with the admonition **to listen – to hear!** Jesus used to do that, too, and so? Jesus said again and again, **“He who has ears to hear – let him hear!”** That's the opposite of in one ear and out the other. It's the opposite of the person who **“looks at them self in a mirror – then turns away – and immediately forgets what they look like!”** The Word of God that we hear in Church – needs to take root in our ♥s. It's something to think about again and again – all week long. If you read your Meditations – it's always based on one of the readings for Sunday. On Tuesday morning – we ask the confirmation students – what was the sermon about last Sunday. Two days later – we ought to be able to remember what the sermon was about. All week long – we need to pray for the people we prayed for on Sunday morning. Take your bulletin home – put that insert on your night stand. Then you can pray for the people printed there!

Micah – three messages – *the pattern being* – being rebuked for your sins – warned about God's impending discipline – then comforted by the power of God's amazing grace! Micah is quoted 3 times in the Bible. 100 years after Micah died – the elders of Judah quoted him – a word of rebuke to the children of Israel. **“Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when he led you in the way? Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Nile? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the Euphrates? Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of me,”** declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.”

Jeremiah 2:17-19 Because the LORD loves us as children – he disciplines us like children – when we wander and stray. No discipline seems pleasant at the time but painful – but in the long-run it yields precious spiritual blessings. Micah is quoted I would dare say – every single Christmas Eve. The Wise men came to Jerusalem and asked where is the one born King of the Jews? Some child always says the chief priests and the scribes quote Micah 5:2 **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins have been from**

old, from ancient times.” It goes on, “Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be our peace...” And finally the Lord Jesus quotes Micah chapter 7 when he says, ³⁵ **For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;** ³⁶ **and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.** Matthew 10:35,36 NASB. Oftentimes it is the members of our own family who can cause us to stumble in our faith. We need to love the Lord Jesus even more – *even more* than we love our children and grandchildren! We need to love Jesus most of all!

Prof. Spaude points out Micah is really short for Micaiah – which is Hebrew for, “*Who is like the LORD?*” Micah’s home town was Moresheth – a small village in the south – on the border between Judah and Philistia – about 25 miles SW of Jerusalem – only a few miles from Gath. Do you remember who was from Gath? Goliath was from Gath! Sometimes Moresheth was called Moresheth Gath. So Micah was a small town prophet preaching in the big city of Jerusalem. Micah wasn’t intimidated by the size of the capital city or its important government people and the well known leaders of the Church. God sent Micah to denounce the oppressive sins of Jerusalem and the rest of Israel and he did so fearlessly! The Holy Spirit in his message made is sufficient, powerful and effective!

Micah preached a stinging law. **“Listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. “My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery.”** The LORD sent Moses and Aaron and Moses’ sister Miriam to set his people free. When Balak king of Moab and that false prophet for rent/sale Balaam tried to harm God’s people – the LORD kept them safe. And so Micah records the people’s sarcastic disrespectful answer! **“With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?”** What an insult! What an insult to think you can buy off the LORD! Our Heavenly Father is not in need of our offerings! Everything already belongs to our Heavenly Father. God’s Word warns again and again, **“Do not store up for your-self treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal.”** Earthly

treasures are only temporary. To work and work so many hours – sacrificing marriage and family and health – all to get more money – will finally find out destructive that is. Go through any nursing home – and tell me – which of those asleep sitting up in front of their blasting TV are the rich ones or the poor ones. Walk through the cemetery and tell me who are the rich ones? Especially by then it doesn't matter, does it? You can buy the biggest and the best – and before you know it – it's obsolete! Flat screen high def TV? Now they have curved screens! Smart phones? That's nice – but now they are making glasses – spectacles – that will google stuff on your lenses! Most of this stuff is so complicated – it's not simple or easy to make it do what it's supposed to do. And then – you have no bars – or your battery is drained – or you don't know the right WiFi password. Now what? Things and stuff wear out – they break down – you drop them into water – or you leave them for just a moment and somebody else walks away with them! Now what?! Our Heavenly Father is not concerned about getting his hands on things and stuff that at best – we are borrowing for a short time. The LORD – the Great I AM says-- ⁷“Listen, my people, and I will speak; I will testify against you, Israel: I am God, your God. ⁸I bring no charges against you concerning your sacrifices or concerning your burnt offerings, which are ever before me. ⁹I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, ¹⁰for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. ¹²If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. ¹³Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? ¹⁴“Sacrifice *thank* offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, ¹⁵and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.” Psalm 50 a Psalm of Asaph.

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? We cannot pay for our sins! You can't pay for transgressions – for all the time we crossed the line. All the times we went too far – ate too much, drank too much, said too much, spent too much, did anything too much. We can't make our sins go away – by human sacrifice – even if that sacrifice might be our own children. Only the blood of Jesus the innocent Son of God – can take away our sins. And Jesus' blood did exactly that! ⁸**He has shown you, O mortal, 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. O mortal** – that's you and me – mortal – in the midst of life we are in death! O mortal – we know what God expects of us from God's Word. He expects us to act justly – that is quite literally

do justice! That is do the right thing for the right reason – with a right ♥ and a right attitude! **Love the Lord your God with all your ♥, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself!** Who is your neighbor? Everyone you see here in Church – everyone you see at work and school – everyone you see on the road – everyone you see on TV – on the news and on the football field during the Super Bowl! **Husbands love your wife like Christ loved the Church. Children obey your parents** and teachers and everyone in authority over you. Act justly and love mercy! Mercy! As I am working on this sermon there is a man in Missouri who is supposed to undergo capital punishment. The robber and murderer was convicted in a court of law of taking the life of a man who owned a jewelry store and wounding his wife so that she has permanent injuries. To love mercy would mean what? That the lady who lost her husband and is permanently injured have mercy on this robber and murderer. That she forgive him for taking the life of her husband. That she forgive him for hurting her body in such a way that it won't be well and whole again until she is in Heaven. That would be so difficult – only Jesus in your ♥ could make you strong enough to do it! That's the miracle of Jesus' forgiving love. When Jesus loves you then and only then are we able **to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with the one true God!** And when we do all glory belongs to Jesus and Him alone!

Josh – the football player who drove 134 mph and killed his friend – was familiar with the dangers of driving drunk. How do I know that? Josh got arrested for drunk driving when he played college football. Part of his sentence bask then was to attend “victim impact meetings” – *more than one!* At victim impact meetings Josh met a woman in a wheelchair – who talked about how a drunk driver turned her into a paraplegic. Josh listened to another man who talked about how he got drunk and smashed into another car. As the ambulance came – he held the hand of his dying victim. There are crashes with drunk drivers every 48 minutes. That means on average – there was a crash during 1st service – a crash during Sunday School and another during 2nd service and probably one more – between the time people started to arrive for church – and the time when the last usher or Church Councilman locks up the door before lunch today! People get killed by drunk drivers in our country – about 4 people every day – 7 days a week – 4 people yesterday, today and tomorrow! There is life destructive behavior like that – and yet – more people got all shook up about a football player who screamed about another football player after the playoff gave 2 weeks ago! Something is backwards there, too. It's not for us to say, “I

thank you Lord that I am not like some people who do terrible things!" It is the Holy Spirit who works in our ♥s an attitude that says, "**God be merciful to me a sinner!**" And Jesus is! *Amen!*

To God alone all glory!
Rev. Anthony L. St. 2002