

“The Lord has an Indictment Against His People”

Micah 6:1-8

We hear in our Old Testament reading some words which are a part of one of the traditional liturgies used on Good Friday. We now do something different here at Our Redeemer – which is a liturgy I like even better. But when I was at Mellen and Pana, on Good Friday, within our liturgy we spoke what is known as the “reproaches.” They each began similar to what we hear from the prophet Micah: “My people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me.”

The Lord reminds us, through the prophet Micah, that an answer has to be given for the sin of the world. All of creation stands accused. This is what the Lord says, “Arise, plead your case before the mountains;. . . For the Lord has an indictment against His people.”

It is an open-and-shut case. The evidence of our sin is all around us. We can’t get away from our sinful nature. The evidence against the world, the evidence against us is overwhelming.

How could we stand up and plead our case? We have nothing to say other than “guilty as charged.” However, there is someone who will plead our case. Christ our Lord has redeemed us from our sin. That is, He has bought us back. God demanded that just punishment be meted out for sin –

and the wages of sin is death.

Christ's death satisfied the demands of justice and God's Law. All this is yours at no cost – other than the cost of discipleship: which, as our Lord says, is an easy yoke and a light burden. The Son of God paid the price for you. And like Abraham, God has credited your faith to you as righteousness.

Micah says, "He has told you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

We don't earn our salvation by doing these things. We demonstrate our love and trust in God for what He has done for us by following the example which He has already set. God acted justly. God loves and has shown kindness. God humbled Himself more than any being on earth could ever attempt. Christ willingly chose to set aside the glory of heaven and the respect which He deserves, and He came to live on earth. He willingly lowered Himself – that is the essence of humility. And in doing so, both the justice and kindness of God was vividly revealed to mankind in that one act upon the cross.

The response to His love that God expects from us – that cost of discipleship – is one of action, not just words. Do justice, even if you think it might harm your bottom line.

Love kindness. Again a plea for action in your life. Have a passion for doing good for others without expecting something in return. Kindness,

like love, is demonstrated in actions over time, not simply in words.

If you are only kind to others three or four days out of the week, you are not a kind person. Even if you are kind to others five or six days out of the week, but on Monday's and the occasion Thursday you better watch out. Or maybe you are kind to your friends, but you treat restaurant workers in shameful ways. Social media has now opened all sorts of doors for a person to spew anger or hatred from afar – or even anonymously. It is said that character is doing the right thing even when no one is looking. That applies to the Internet also.

And we are to walk humbly with our God. We are to be willing to set aside whatever earthly position or pride which we, or the world, think we deserve. And we are to follow Christ's example and focus on the needs of others first.

We will never do this perfectly. We probably will never even do it very well. But our Lord requires that we express a willingness to strive to be just and kind and humble. It brings joy to our Father in heaven to see this.

It is like our own children who do not always do what we want – how we want – when we want. But, oh, how it brings joy to our hearts when we do see it, or even when we see them really trying.

That is how God looks at us. We are His little children who bring Him great joy. We bring Him a lot of frustration also, but that doesn't end or even diminish His love for us. It has really only been since I became a father that I understand how God looks at us.

You have been adopted as a child of God. In Baptism, God adopted you and placed His Name upon you. Like all of His children, you have a Father in heaven who loves you more than even your earthly parents could love you.

You have a brother in Jesus Christ who will stand up and plead your case for you. And it is in you that God has chosen to be the dwelling place of His Holy Spirit – for our bodies are His temple.

He is our God and we are His people. The Law demands that our love for God be the motive for every thought, word, and deed. Where we fail and when we fail, there is Christ our Lord to plead our case and give His repeated assurance that we have been declared not guilty. We have an answer to the Lord's reproach spoken by the prophet Micah. "My people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me."

"Arise, plead your case before the mountains;. . . For the Lord has an indictment against His people."

In your Baptism, in the Absolution, in the very body and blood of Christ, there we find the answer to the Lord's indictment. There we find the forgiveness of sins bought with the blood of the Son of God Himself. In response to this, as a way of offering thanks, we are to "do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God." Amen.