



CHURCH of
the SAVIOUR

2537 Lee Road
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118-4136
Telephone: 216-321-8880
Website: www.COTSumc.org

“Love Does”

May 29, 2022

Micah 6:6-8

Rev. Andy Call, Lead Pastor

As I sat down to write the first draft of the sermon on Wednesday morning, I felt empty. Less than 24 hours after an 18-year-old gunman took the lives of nineteen children and two teachers at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, I found I had very little space in my head or in my heart for hope. That unspeakable act marked the 213th mass shooting in the United States this year, by far the deadliest. As of Wednesday, 242 people had lost their lives in a mass shooting event in 2022, according to the non-profit Gun Violence Archive.¹ Now, I know that a good sermon is a prophetic word, one that holds up a mirror so we can see the world as it is, then opens a window to see the world as it might be. Or to put it another way, to name the problem of our current reality and offer the Gospel that will transform that reality into God’s intent for us. But I have to tell you that on Wednesday, I wasn’t feeling it. Name the problem? Easy. *Too many guns. Not enough resources for mental health. Political leaders with corporations and special interests in their pockets. A populace grown numb to acts of violence that no longer shock us into action and deaf to cries for help.* But hope? All out of it. I’m tired of preaching sermons and writing letters about this. I’m tired of offering carefully worded prayers. I’m tired of vigils and community memorials. None of it seems to make any difference.

But Sunday comes whether we’re ready or not. God’s Word has a way of speaking into the moments for which we have no words of our own. So I turned to the text we selected for today. Though Micah’s call for justice, kindness, and humility is well known, you might not know the rest of the passage. Chapter six of Micah begins in a cosmic courtroom:

Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.

Hear, you mountains, the case of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations of the earth,
for the LORD has a case against his people,
and he will contend with Israel. (Micah 6:1-2)

God wants an explanation for what we’ve made of the world, for the violence and self-interest we accept and even promote: *I’ve done everything for you. I formed you as my own people. I redeemed you from captivity in Egypt. I’ve brought blessing after blessing. And this is how you repay me?*

Then we come to our passage for today, which begins with a rather pathetic response from the people, actually: *Well, what do you want us to do, God? What did you expect of us, anyway? How much do we have to give in the offering plate? What’s it going to take to buy off your anger? Just tell us what to do and we’ll do it.* As if.

And then the prophet responds, taking up the case for God. *Have you not been paying attention? It’s simple, really. Do what God’s been telling us all along. You can’t just go through the motions or perform a ritual or say the right words. Showing up at church and making an occasionally offering isn’t going to cut it. You’ve already been told what God requires of you. Do justice. love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Now, do it!*

Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God. Sounds simple, but it’s far from easy. **Do justice:** The Hebrew word is *mispat*, which is something we do, not God. We have to work for fairness and equality for all, especially for the powerless and voiceless. **Love kindness:** The Hebrew word is *hesed*, which means something like loving-kindness or faithful love. It has to do with loyalty and faithfulness, lived not out of duty or obligation, but out of genuine love. **Walk humbly with God:** We often focus on the part about being humble, which is no small feat in our self-inflated society. But

¹ <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/mass-shooting>

the emphasis is on walking *with God*, which means going where *God* wants to go and in *God's* way, not pursuing our own wishes or our own agenda.

Though the particulars change, the issue is timeless. Apparently, God's people have always looked for an easy way out, as though prayers and remembrances will substitute for faithful action. I don't know if that makes me feel better or worse.

Unless we're willing to *do* justice, we should stop praying for it. I mean it. How insulting is it to ask God to do something for us we're not willing to participate in? Don't ask why God lets people carry military grade weapons into schools and kill children; God's asking us the same question. God doesn't make our laws or elect our politicians. Don't blame God. Until we realize that our faith demands something of us, we're not really following the God we claim to love.

Our track record as a nation doesn't give us much reason for optimism. History suggests it's more likely that the passion and outrage we are experiencing today will fade and we'll just keep playing the game of partisan politics while nothing changes. But thank God, *optimism* isn't the same as *hope*. The Apostle Paul, writing from prison when both his movement and his likelihood of freedom seemed to be hopeless, insisted that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and *hope does not disappoint us*, because God's love has been poured into our hearts." I may not have optimism in our nation's leaders or our collective will, but I do have hope because God is still God. And I believe that if God's people will get off our butts and put our faith into action, we *can* make a difference. As Dr. King preached, "How long? Not long." Not long if God's people will say *enough is enough*. Not long if we refuse to let this moment pass us by. Not long if we care more about our children than our guns. Not long if we believe that neither principalities nor powers will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Not long if we take heed of the words of Micah to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

Friends, we cannot lose hope. The stakes are simply too high. If we really love our children, if we really love our neighbors, if we really love the God who gave us the gift of life, we will rise to meet the moment. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. *Love never fails*. Do we have the courage to believe that, even today? Love isn't just a sentimental idea. Love does. And love wins. Always. Thanks be to God. Amen.