

## What Does the Lord Require of You?

Micah 6:1-8

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, January 30, 2011

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The mountains see what you do. They will bear witness about what you do on the Last Day. I suppose that is good for us because there aren't many mountains around here. But then the hills see what we do. They will bear witness about us on the Last Day.

In fact all of nature sees what we do. It will all bear witness to what we have done on the Last Day. The cat or the dog that you own sees everything that you do. Things that your family does not see you do, they see you do. They will bear witness about you on the Last Day.

Nature is not too thrilled with us either. After all when we sinned God cursed the ground because of our sin. He said that the thorns and the thistles would grow for us. He said that our vocations would become a toil. He said that we would return to the dust of the ground. Since from dust we were taken, to dust we would return. Nature was hoping that would only apply to humans since they were the ones who messed up. Nature was surprised when it applied to them also. God subjected everything to decay. Great. Now everything was messed up. Now everything was going to die. The dogs began to die. The cats and the cattle began to die. The plants and the trees began to die though that did not seem to concern them as much as it did the animals. The fish died. The sheep died. Everything died. Those humans really messed us up. God subjected everything to decay. Now everything dies. There is no love lost between nature and human beings. After all it was not a dog or a cat or a sheep or a goat who ate the forbidden fruit. It was the man and his wife. Now nature gives us its bounty grudgingly. It knows who did this to it. It will gladly bear witness to God regarding our sins on the Last Day.

God is building a case against His people. He is building a case against us. He is collecting evidence. He is gathering His witnesses.

I wonder what the evidence will say regarding you? Of course that is safe for me to wonder. What I really should be thinking about is what the evidence will say about me. What will the mountains testify to God about at my trial? What will the hills remember about my activities? What will the ground around my home and in my fields remember about the things that I have done upon them? The blood of Abel cried out to God from the ground. It informed God that Cain had killed Abel. What will the ground say about you? What will the cat and the dog recall about you when the Lord brings His case against you?

Then I dread the human witnesses that God may bring against me. What if God calls an old girlfriend to the stand? What will she say about me and about my behavior? What if God calls my ex wife or ex husband to the stand? How long will He let them talk? What will they say about my behavior? What if He calls my children to the stand? Finally, they will be able to say whatever they want to say and there will be no influence from you. God will want to know the truth. He will want to know the truth about you raised them. What if God calls your parents to the stand? What will they say about your behavior? Will they report that you had honored them? What if God calls your friends and neighbors to the stand in the case He has against you? Will they defend you? Will they speak well of you? Will they withhold the things that you have done? What if God makes them take an oath before they give their testimony? Can they afford not to tell the truth about you?

What if God puts your car on the stand? Will it bear witness regarding your activities with it? What if He puts your computer on the stand? What if the computer records that you have erased have

been perfectly preserved in the computer's memory when it is swept by the search engine of God? What if God puts your cell phone on the stand? What if it bears testimony regarding whom you have contacted and what it was that you said or what use to which you have put the phone? If God can make the mouth of a donkey speak, He make your computer, your car or your cell phone speak. He can make your bank accounts speak. They can spill everything that they know about you.

The Lord is building His case against you. After all what has He ever done to you? Well? What has He ever done to you? Answer Him!

He gave you His only begotten Son. Do you know how miraculous the birth of our Lord is? We human beings are impressed with spectacular miracles. We are impressed with Moses. When the Sea of Reeds divides in two with a wall of water on one side and a wall of water on the other, that is impressive to us. When the Egyptians pursue the Israelites through the Sea of Reeds and God returns the sea to its place and they drown, that is impressive. We like impressive miracles. We like Elijah calling down fire from the heaven. But those miracles are not as impressive as the Annunciation of our Lord. It is not as impressive as the conception of Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Dividing seas and fire falling can be done in nature. It is not typical, but it can happen. Do you know how much God has to organize in order to convert Himself into being human? First of all, He has to make Himself human when He is God. The unkillable becomes killable. The all knowing becomes ignorant without losing His knowledge. Figure that one out. There are so many contradictions in who Jesus is. God must balance each one of them very carefully in order to become human like us. The conception itself must be carefully done. God brings forth life where there was none. Mary is going to have to be supplied with a set of genes that are not there. God is going to have to supply those chemicals. It is not like Mary has a "Y" gene lying around. God must supply it. What kind of genes does He supply? Don't know. How does He supply them? Don't know. There are no explanations for these things. It cannot be explained as a freak event of nature. It is a far greater miracle than the one that occurred in Egypt.

And the Son of God is here not just to be here, but to accomplish something for us. It is not simply that God is performing the greatest philosophical miracle of all time. He is here to accomplish something for us. Jesus goes around then performing miracles and people these miracles are for you. It might seem as if Jesus heals the paralyzed man for the paralyzed man's sake, but if Jesus were really healing the sick for the sake of the sick, He would have spent a lot more time healing them. Instead Jesus uses His power to heal the paralyzed man to prove that He also has the authority to forgive sins. Therefore the miracle is for you. It proves that Jesus has the authority to forgive you. It tells you where you can get your sins forgiven. The healings also prove that Jesus is here to bring about the New Creation. Jesus is here to establish a New Humanity. Jesus is indeed the One who is to come. We shall not expect another.

He successfully resisted temptation. He was the only human being to have done so. That is a miracle in and of itself. Satan was asking Jesus to do all of these wondrous things when Jesus was all the time accomplishing something ever more wondrous, the resistance of temptation. What we could not achieve and still haven't Jesus has already done.

All of this God has given to you. If that were not enough God gave the life of His Son. Jesus was crucified for us and for our salvation. He gave His life. It atones for our sins. The blood of Jesus Christ washes all of our sins away. God gave this to you. God gave Him to you. God gave His only Son for you. He had to endure the death of His Son. He gave Him to you. What has God ever done to you?

Then the greatest miracle of them all, He raised His Son from the dead. Jesus came out of that tomb. You now live in a world where the dead walk. They do not die again.

All of this God has done for you. Remember all of it. Do not forget it. "What have I ever done to you that you are treating Me this way?"

Well now, what are we going to do?

The Lord is building a case against us. He has witnesses against us. He has forensic evidence against us. He is innocent. It is not like we can accuse Him of wrongdoing. He has been faithful to us. He has sent His Son to save us. He has raised Him from the dead. What more could He do for us than what He has done for us.

What are we going to do? How are we going to appear in front of our God? How are we going to even begin to worship Him? How are we going to appear before Him in His presence? He has every right to strike us dead and leave us there. He has every right to damn us all. What are we going to do? How shall we come in front of the High God?

Shall we bring offerings? Shall we put more in the offering plate? Will that get it done? Shall we put our entire bank accounts in the offering plate? Shall we give away all that we have and live destitute lives? If the offering plate is not good enough, shall we give it to the poor? Shall we give it all away to charity? Shall we sell our houses and our cars and live in poverty ourselves? Will this make us worthy to stand in front of God?

Money is so dirty. Surely God is not impressed with offerings of money. Surely God is impressed with other sacrifices. Surely there is something better that we could be doing. Surely there is some other way to make things up to God. We will go to church every Sunday. We will never miss! That is what we will do. That will please God. We will make it up to Him that way. We will never miss church! We will go to the adult Bible class. We will read our Bibles every day and never miss. That is much better than an offering of money.

Is that what it is going to take? Will that do it? Will countless church services make up for the things that you have done? Will the Lord be pleased with that?

Surely then there is something that I could do. I could devote my entire vocation to God. I will put fishes on my containers. I will make sure that I talk about God and Jesus Christ every opportunity that I get. I will witness for Jesus. Everyone will know that I am a Christian. I will hide it from no one. I will change vocations! What if I go to seminary? What if I become a missionary? What if I devote my life to service to God all of the time and not engage in a secular vocation? Will that be enough? Will the Lord be pleased with that?

I will sacrifice my life! I will surrender by body to the flames! Well now, if you sacrifice your life, what would be the point of that? You may as well stand trial before God and have Him declare you guilty. It would amount to the same thing.

What about your offspring? What about sacrificing your children? Will offering your firstborn take away your transgressions? Will the fruit of your womb take away the sin of your life?

Calm down. You don't need to do any of these things. You don't need to offer any kind of sacrifice. You have already heard that the One necessary sacrifice has already been made. Jesus has already made the One sacrifice that takes away sins. Calm down. There is nothing to make up for when the Lord puts you to trial. There is nothing to justify when the Lord puts you to trial. Or to say it another way, you have nothing to fear on the Last Day.

The Lord has told you what He is seeking from you. Do justice.

Now when the Lord says, "Do justice," keep in mind that He has His justice in mind. Justice is not what we think is right and wrong or fair, it is what He thinks is right and wrong and fair. But then do justice. Don't worry about a hundred things that you think you need to do. It is all taken care of. You are ok. All that is left for you to do is justice. That is all.

Love covenant faithfulness. Or another easier way of saying the same thing is to love mercy. Love mercy in all of its forms. Love the mercy that you have received from Jesus Christ. Love the mercy that you have the opportunity to show others. It is the same mercy after all.

Be modest to walk with your God. You are not God. He is. You are not the Savior. He is. You do not need to achieve. He has done so. He is God. You are not. Let him be God. Let Him be the Savior. Let Him take care of you. He is God. Let Him get on with it! Be modest. Know your place. Know your vocation, the one that God has given to you. Do that and let Him be God.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.