***Micah 6:6-8 With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God?  
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? 7Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?***

Micah the Prophet prophesied in Judah between 735 and 710 BC, around the same time as Isaiah and Hosea. The Assyrians had conquered Israel during this time, but Judah would not fall until about 100 years later to Babylon. His prophecies told of the judgement of God that Judah would experience for oppression of the poor, dishonest rulers, greed and covetousness, and pride. In these verses, he speaks to the people of that day and down through the ages to us, giving us a clear and concise definition of what God requires of us.

In verses 6-7, Micah says - *With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? 7Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Micah starts this chapter stating the complaint that God has against His people. This is alarming, as well it should be, to the people listening to the prophecy. In verses 6-7, we see the people asking – what shall I DO to please God? What shall I give Him? It reveals the covetous nature of the people. They move straight to giving and doing, much as people do today. If we just give enough – well, giving is a wonderful thing, when done with the right heart. But it doesn’t impress God. Shall I bow myself down? Well, bowing to God is a wonderful thing, when done in humility and reverence. Like in Israel, as in Judah, and as in the United States today, people seek things external to themselves to appease God. Jesus calls these people hypocrites in Matthew 23:23 saying that they tithe, but neglect the weightier matters. Sinners seeking to get on God’s good side, without changing anything inside. Rivers of oil, thousands of rams, even my own firstborn, yes, I’ll give the life of my child so I don’t have to change my sinful ways, leave my sinful lifestyle, give up my wicked behavior. And before we act shocked and dismayed, there are parents all over this nation and world sacrificing their children on the altar of self-indulgence. We call that altar of neglect social media or living our best life or any number of other names, but anything that steals time from our God and our children is a sacrifice to a false god.

Now, Micah gives the answer in verse 8, starting out with - *He has shown you, O man, what is good.* God has shown you, but you don’t want to see. Moses, more than 500 years earlier, in Deuteronomy 10:12, tells us what is required – fear God, walk in His ways, love Him, serve Him. He has shown you – He has announced it through His prophets. This is no secret. And I’d say the same this morning. God has made it no secret how we are to be in relationship with Him. We choose to do the external while ignoring the spiritual. We focus on doing and not in being. We look at what people do and not who they are.

Micah finishes - *And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?* God requires of His people the weightier matters, as Jesus calls them in Matthew 23:23 – Justice, mercy, and faith. All of these require a change in our spirit. The people of that time loved their sin. Micah 2 tells us that they lay in their bed and dreamed of iniquity, getting up at morning light so they could practice evil. What Micah says is required is not what they wanted to hear. They wanted to give a little something from the riches gained through evil. Appease God with gifts. But God requires a change of heart, a change of direction, a change of allegiance. To be friends with the world is to be an enemy of God. Micah is saying – you must be a friend of God.

Likewise today, we cannot walk in justice, mercy, and faith, while pursuing the world. The rams and oil, money and stuff requires nothing of us. Doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly requires a complete renewal of our souls. None of these come naturally to us. It’s only through the renewal of souls by the Holy Spirit, placed in us by God, rooted in our faith in Jesus, that true change happens.

This week, we need to consider how are we relating with God? Are we doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly? God is not looking for rams and oil, stuff and money. He requires a genuine change in spirit. The world encourages us to walk in anger, selfishness, lust, and greed. The Spirit filled life God requires produces love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. What altar do we find ourselves beside this morning? The altar of self or the altar of spirit? May our walk reveal a life filled with justice, mercy, love, and faith, spent walking humbly with our God each and every day.