

Jan 29th
Summerland United Church
Spiritual Affective Disorder: Make my Day

Scripture:

Micah 6:1-8

Reflection: A Promise

Hear what God is saying to you, the passage begins, Micah the prophet who is sharing these words speaks the rest of the verse as if he using God's voice. God then says to the people, *rise and plead your case*, invoking imagery of a court case, a trial. God is bringing a case against the people of Israel. And the situation is this. The people of Israel have not followed the covenant; The agreement between them and God, which has been made and remade multiple times with Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Rebecca and Isaac, Rachel, Leah and Jacob and Moses.

God has continued to remember them and bless them as God's people, but they have turned away and followed other Gods, or forgotten their faith altogether.

So, in Micah God is putting them on trial so to speak, calling the mountains and hills, the very foundations of Earth, all of creation to be witnesses to the proceedings.

God cries, *what have I done to you? In what way have I wearied you? Answer me*, God pleads. God is despite to understand what more could possibly have been done to hold the people's favour. God reminds the people of all the times God has saved them, been there for them, and got them out of slavery and out of the wilderness. God has done all these wonderful things for the people, but now they seem to be taking God for granted.

In the covenants God created with the people, the expectations have been simple. With Noah, God promised not to flood the land again, and gave the people the sign of the Rainbow. God makes this promise not just to the people, but to the animals, the plants, all living things. The mountains, the hills hear these words and the promise, the covenant is made to all creation. Which might be why they are called as witnesses to this new trial

With Sarah and Abraham God promised them a child and from this child, their descendants would be in number like the stars.

This promise is repeated to Isaac, their child, when he marries Rebecca. God tells Isaac not to go down into Egypt, but to stay on the land where he currently lives and God bless him. Again, the promise is made to Rachel and Jacob, Isaacs's son, when Rachel has her only child Joseph.

However, the people of God do end up in bondage in Egypt. A thousand or more years later, God selects Moses and his brother and sister Aaron and Miriam to bring the people out of

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Egypt and return them to the land that was once theirs and creates a new covenant with the people. A promise that they will be blessed by God as the chosen ones.

What has God asked for in return? You might be wondering. Was the people's side of the agreement so arduous, so overwhelming it was impossible to follow? No. not really. In exchange for freedom from bondage and a return to the land of Milk and Honey, God gave the people the Ten Commandments to follow as a way of living a good life.

In the Christian Education Curriculum Godly Play, the 10 commandments are called the 10 best ways. They are worded this way: Love God, Love God more than Anything Else, Say God's name with respect, Keep the Sabbath day special, Honour your family, Harm no one, Respect All relationships, Don't steal, Tell the Truth, Be happy with what you have (don't be jealous).

When we use Godly Play, we summarize these into three sections Love God. Love People. God loves us. And this is what the Covenant between God and the people is. This doesn't seem unreasonable to me, or particularly difficult, yet, clearly the people are struggling because God saw fit to have Micah challenge them and metaphorically bring them to trial.

The people respond to this accusation defensively and with sarcasm *What more do you want from us? More burnt sacrifice, 1000 rams, 10 thousand rivers of oil, our firstborn?* As if to say they believe what they are giving to this relationship is enough and God's demands are already ridiculous, so we'll offer even more ridiculous offerings to put God in God's place. Thank you very much.

There's a moment here, where I can imagine both Micah and God facepalming and shaking their heads. The people have missed the whole point. As we often do.

Micah says, no o mortal, God has told you what is required: *do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.*

And in my imagination part has Micah shaking the people's shoulders, and shouting "*why is this so hard for you to understand!*" But he doesn't.

And why is this so hard for us to understand? For me, it almost seems too easy. As if, for it to have value it needs to be hard. This seems to be a common theme throughout history, we make things harder and harder for ourselves until they become impossible to achieve. And it seems to be the way of things, especially when it comes to faith. Later in the Gospels, Jesus will create a new commandment, a new covenant – *that you love one another as I have loved you.*

That seems pretty easy to me, but boy we humans really struggle with it.

And so, we need reminders every so often. We need to be, maybe not put on trial the way it happens in Micah, but called to account. Take some time to remember and recommit ourselves to the Covenant we, as people of God, are a part of.

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We do this during baptism and membership confirmations, where congregation members also recall and restate our own vows. Today we're holding another covenanting ceremony. One where all of you commit to helping me with my learning during my two-year placement here. And while, my name is going to get said a lot during the ceremony this isn't just about me.

It's about all of us and our relationship with God. We are taking the already established covenant we have with God as people of God and changing the details a little. I am agreeing to serve you and learn from you. You in turn will be asked to support me in my learning with love as we all try to live God's way. Which is really what the ten best ways and Micah is asking of us.

So when we move into the Covenant part of this service, take a moment to remember the covenant we are all a part of, this is an opportunity for all of us to remember the vows we've made during baptism, confirmation, transfer of memberships, reaffirmations of faith and if those are not something you've ever been a part of, that's ok, because as we enter into this covenant, you are welcome to be a part of it too. This is a chance to create your own connection if that feels right to you.

This covenant is for all of us, another gift from God that connects us as a community. And what's more, as we think about the words from Micah – do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God – it's an opportunity to connect to our wider community as well. To fulfil our part of the covenant we have to take these gifts out into the world, to the people, to the mountains and the hills and all of creation.

May it be so.