

Day by Day

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It is strange how powerful music can be. Pairing meaningful words with moving music can produce a very powerful result that is more emotional and insightful to the listener than just hearing the words alone. Hearing a song or a piece of music can instantly transport us back in time to a specific place, to a specific event or to a specific person. Music can make us instantly happy, or melancholy or sad, depending on what we associate the music with.

My all-time favorite song is “Sailing” by Christopher Cross. Whenever I hear that song, I am transported back to my college days in the summer of 1980, as a 21-year-old working on a surveying field crew for the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Recently, I heard the song “Day by Day” which brought back memories of my early teenage years. The song was played extensively on the radio back in 1973. Although the song was associated with a movie which was not well received by the majority of the churches at the time, the song itself had some impactful and memorable words.

The words to the song are:

*Day by day, day by day,
Oh, dear LORD, three things I pray,
To see Thee more clearly,
Love Thee more dearly,
Follow Thee more nearly,
Day by Day.*

Please turn with me to Micah 6. While I was listening to the song and thinking about these words – the three things to pray – to see God the Father more clearly, to love God the Father more dearly, and to follow God the Father more nearly, the song made me think of the passages in Micah 6. In this passage, the question was being asked concerning what would please God the Father the most.

Micah 6:6 *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7) Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8) He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

In my sermon this afternoon entitled Day by Day, I would like to explore these three actions from Micah 6 that God the Father requires of us, to explore how much of these actions that we exhibit in our lives, and to explore how we can better exhibit those actions to deepen our relationship with God the Father, with Jesus Christ, and with one another.

The first action that God the Father requires of us in Micah 6:8 is:

1. To do justly

In Micah 6:8, the words for *to do justly* in Hebrew are “עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט” (asowt mishpat) which means *to do justice, to do what is right*. “Mishpat” is Strong’s #4941.

The New Living Translation translates *to do justly* in Micah 6:8 as *to do what is right*.

Please turn with me to Genesis 18. God the Father chose Abraham millennia ago because He knew that Abraham would do what is right.

Genesis 18:19 *For I have chosen him [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.*
(NIV)

The Hebrew word for *just* in verse 19 again is “מִשְׁפָּט” (mishpat). God the Father chose Abraham because he was just and did justly.

Please turn with me to Ezekiel 18. Yehovah lists several attributes, attitudes and actions that are exhibited by someone who does justly and who does what is right.

Ezekiel 18:5 *Suppose a certain man is righteous and does what is just [מִשְׁפָּט – mishpat] and right.*

7) *He is a merciful creditor, not keeping the items given as security by poor debtors. He does not rob the poor but instead gives food to the hungry and provides clothes for the needy.*

8) *He grants loans without interest, stays away from injustice, is honest and fair when judging [“מִשְׁפָּט” - mishpat] others,*

9) and faithfully obeys my decrees [“מִשְׁפָּט”- mishpat] and regulations. Anyone who does these things is just and will surely live, says the Sovereign LORD. (NIV)

Please turn with me to Proverbs 21:15.

Proverbs 21:15 *It is joy to a righteous [man] to do what is right; but it is ruin for the workers of iniquity. (Darby Bible Translation)*

Again, the words *to do what is right* in Hebrew are “עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט” (asowt mishpat). So a righteous man considers it a joy to do what is right, to follow the Father’s laws, and to do what is pleasing in the sight of his Heavenly Father.

Please turn with me to Matthew 25. Centuries later, Jesus Christ also listed several attributes, attitudes and actions that are exhibited by someone who does justly and who does what is right. These people will be on Christ’s right hand in the future and will be rewarded by God the Father.

Matthew 25:31 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:*

32) *And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats:*

33) *And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

34) *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

35) *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:*

36) *Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

37) *Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?*

38) *When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?*

39) *Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

40) *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Brethren, do we resemble these people and the attitudes that they had in their lives? Brethren, I don’t think that most of us personally know of people who are naked or completely destitute or in prison, but what do we do for the sick? Are we willing to give of our time to lend a hand of support, a shoulder

of support, a heart of support to those who need emotional or physical or spiritual support and help?

Brethren, what works are we producing? What fruit are we bearing? Please turn with me to James 2. The Christian churches of today confuse works with grace. We can never earn our salvation through works. Salvation and grace are a gift from God that cannot be earned. It is priceless, beyond comparison. But God expects us to have positive Godly works in our lives.

James 2:14 *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*

15) *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,*

16) *And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

17) *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

18) *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

19) *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*

20) *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

21) *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*

22) *Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

23) *And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

24) *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

Please turn with me to Matthew 5. Jesus told His disciples and is telling us that we should be known by our good works, not for our glory, but for the glory of God the Father.

Matthew 5:14 *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*

15) Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (KJV)

Please turn with me to Romans 12. Brethren, God the Father has given each of us certain talents and gifts. Do we use these talents and gifts to help others? Do we use them to serve others? Do we use them to glorify God the Father through our good works?

Romans 12:5 *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

6) Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7) Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teaches, on teaching;

8) Or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

9) Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10) Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;

11) Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12) Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13) Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. (KJV)

Brethren, do we have the talent or gift of exhorting and encouraging others when they are sad or undergoing trials? Or being generous to others in need? Or being merciful to others? Or being cheerful for others to lift their spirits? Or being diligent? Or truly being loving and caring for others? Or being patient with others? Or fervently and continuously praying for others? Do we see ourselves in any of these descriptions?

So brethren, let's strive to do justly and to do what is right in our lives.

The second action that God the Father requires of us in Micah 6:8 is:

2. To love mercy

In Micah 6:8, the word for *mercy* in Hebrew is “חֶסֶד” (khesed) which means “goodness, lovingkindness, mercy.” “Khesed” is Strong’s #2617. Mercy and lovingkindness go hand in hand. They are inseparable.

Brethren, what does it mean to love mercy and lovingkindness? How does one love mercy? The context is to love giving mercy and showing lovingkindness to others.

An important aspect of mercy is that mercy always requires forgiveness. Mercy and forgiveness go hand in hand. Without forgiveness, there is no mercy.

We can see someone in need, and we can have compassion on that someone and are motivated to help that someone in his or her need. Compassion is different from mercy, because compassion does not require forgiveness.

However, if that certain someone has done something against us that has caused us hurt, if we truly forgive that person, we are showing mercy to that person. We are not requiring vengeance or justice for the pain that they have caused. Instead, we extend mercy to the person by forgiving them.

Brethren, do we practice this in our daily lives? Do we forgive others? Or do we bottle up the hurt inside, all the while becoming more and more upset, until the upset becomes bitterness?

Brethren, we as brothers and sisters with one another in the Church can sometimes act pretty callously toward one another emotionally, vocally, visually and spiritually. We are all human. We all make mistakes. In most cases, members do not really understand or realize that they are offending others by their words or by their actions. Instead of properly handling the situation, we tend to choose to stew about it, to have "righteous indignation" about it, or to tell others all about the offense which somehow makes us feel better. Yet, in the end, it doesn't.

Please turn with me to Matthew 18. Christ gave us a blueprint for resolving issues and to bring reconciliation between members.

Matthew 18:15 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

16) But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (KJV)

Brethren, do we actually follow this blueprint? This is how God the Father and Jesus Christ want us to resolve our differences. Step 1 is to go to our brother or sister in love to discuss the offense with the express purpose of reconciling with our brother. There are responsibilities on both sides. The person initiating the contact has to come in a spirit of reconciliation, not in a spirit of vindication or vengeance. And the person receiving the

contact has to be willing to listen and understand the feelings of the other person who has been hurt. Both people have to show mercy: the first needing to show forgiveness and the second needing to show patience and understanding.

Brethren, do we do this? Forget about Steps 2 and 3. We always worry about Steps 2 and 3, when we don't even follow Step 1. Instead of following Step 1 and going to our brother in love and in mercy, do we find ourselves talking to others about the issue, which does nothing to resolve the issue and bring about reconciliation? Do we find ourselves instead going to the ministry? That is definitely not Step 1.

Brethren, following the guidelines of Matthew 18 is a way that we love mercy.

But maybe we are hurt again. What do we do then? Let's read verse 21.

Matthew 18:21 *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*
22) *Jesus says unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times : but, Until seventy times seven. (KJV)*

Please turn with me to Matthew 6. Christ told His disciples about the importance of forgiveness and mercy and He also gave a warning to those who will not forgive and show mercy.

Matthew 6:14 *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15) But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Please turn with me to Matthew 5. Jesus showed this importance of showing mercy to others and reconciling with other in His directives in Matthew 5:23.

Matthew 5:23 *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there you remember that your brother hath ought against you;*
24) *Leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

How many disagreements, offenses, hurt feelings and perceived wrongs could be resolved if only we would just talk to one another in love?

The opposite of mercy is vengeance. The world is drunk with vengeance. There is so much injustice, and so much miscarriage of justice, that the world sees vengeance as the solution to the problem at hand.

Please turn with me to Romans 12. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Roman congregation to forgive others instead of seeking vengeance. In doing so, we are putting our faith and our trust in God the Father to make things right.

Romans 12:17 *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

18) *If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.*

19) *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, says the Lord.*

20) *Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head.*

21) *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Brethren, what would our lives be like if God the Father did not show us mercy and forgive us of our sins, our shortcomings, our blunders, our mistakes, our bad attitudes, our bad judgments, and our stubbornness?

Please turn with me to Psalms 25. David wrote about God the Father's mercy many, many times in the Psalms that he wrote. We'll turn to just five of the many scriptures that we could turn to in the Psalms.

Psalms 25:10 *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. (KJV)*

Psalms 86:15 *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. (KJV)*

Psalms 103:08 *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. (KJV)*

Psalms 117:02 *For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise ye the LORD. (KJV)*

Psalms 145:08 *The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. (KJV)*

In all of these verses, the Hebrew word for *mercy* is “חֶסֶד” (khesed).

Please turn with me to Deuteronomy 4. Yehovah told the Israelites that He would be merciful to them, even after they have been punished severely for their disobedience, if they would repent and be obedient.

Deuteronomy 4:29 *But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.*

30) *When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;*

31) *(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them. (KJV)*

God the Father is merciful and will forgive us even when we have strayed way, way away from Him. Maybe we think that we have strayed too far away from Him, and He won't take us back. No matter what sin that we have committed, if we turn and repent, He will show us mercy and forgive us. Please turn with me to Luke 6. Our Heavenly Father shows mercy to us each minute of each hour of each day of each year of our lives.

Luke 6:27 *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,*

28) *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

29) *And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.*

30) *Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.*

31) *And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*

32) *For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.*

33) *And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.*

34) *And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.*

35) *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*

36) *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (KJV)*

The Greek word for *merciful* in verse 36 is “οἰκτίρων” (oiktirmon) which means “merciful, compassionate.”

Brethren, do we practice this type of behavior? Are we quickly willing and ready to forgive others? Are we merciful like our Heavenly Father is merciful? How closely do we resemble our Father in this area?

Please turn with me to Luke 23. Again, the perfect example of Jesus is shown when He was nailed on the cross. Knowing that He was the Son of God, knowing that He was physically hurting horrifically, knowing that He was being taunted and ridiculed, and knowing that it would all end in death, Christ still loved mercy, still showed compassion, and still showed forgiveness.

Luke 23:33 *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

34) Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35) And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36) And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37) And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. (KJV)

Brethren, are we able to forgive others and to show mercy even when we are facing injustice, when we are being taunted and ridiculed, when we are beaten with words, when we are bullied, when we are hurt emotionally?

I know many of us have been hurt by others in the Church in the past. Maybe we have been overlooked by others. Maybe we have been neglected by others. Maybe we have not been shown the love that Christians should show to one another. Maybe others have not exhibited the fruits of God’s Spirit in dealing with us. Maybe our lives have been a journey of going from one hurt to another.

The way to break the chains that imprison us emotionally, mentally and spiritually is to forgive and to show mercy. Loving mercy and showing mercy to others is one of the most liberating actions that we can take. Forgiving others is liberating because it cuts away the emotional baggage of resentment, bitterness, and anger that weigh us down. God the Father is pleased when we forgive, and He will always make it right in our lives.

So brethren, let’s strive to love mercy in our lives.

The third action that God the Father requires of us in Micah 6:8 is:

3. To walk humbly with our God

In Micah 6:8, the word for *humbly* in Hebrew is “צַנֵּעַ” (tsana) which means “to be humble or modest.” “Tsana” is Strong’s #6800.

Please turn with me to Proverbs 11:2, which is the only other verse in the Old Testament which contains this word “צַנֵּעַ” (tsana).

Proverbs 11:2 *When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.* (KJV)

The word for *lowly* in verse 2 is “צַנֵּעַ” (tsana).

Proverbs 11:2 *When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.* (NASB)

Brethren, God the Father takes our humility before Him very seriously. He simply chooses not to work with proud and puffed up people.

Please turn with me to Proverbs 6. In fact, a proud look (the opposite of walking humbly with Him) is one of the seven things that God the Father hates.

Proverbs 6:16 *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:*

- 17) *A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,*
- 18) *A heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,*
- 19) *A false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren.* (KJV)

The very first thing on the list of what Yehovah hates is a proud look. The Hebrew words for *proud look* are “עֵינַיִם רָמוּוֹת” (enayim ramowt). Enayim is Strong’s #5869 which means “eyes”, and ramowt is Strong’s #7311 which means haughty or arrogant. The eyes are windows to the soul and to the inner man. So, one of the things that Yehovah detests is a haughty arrogant attitude and frame of mind and frame of life. God the Father cannot work with someone who is haughty and arrogant.

Arrogance and haughtiness tend to puff us up emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 4. The Apostle Paul warns us about being puffed up.

1 Corinthians 4:6 *And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. (KJV)*

The Greek verb for *puffed up* is “φουσιώ” (fusioo) which is Strong’s #5448 and means “to inflate, to puff up, to be arrogant or proud.”

Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13 and we will read one characteristic of agape, the Godly selfless love that God the Father and Jesus Christ have for us.

1 Corinthians 13:4 *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, (KJV)*

Again, the Greek verb for *puffed up* is “φουσιώ.” If we have the love of God within us, we will not be puffed up.

Please turn with me to Isaiah 66. Again, God the Father does not work with the proud, but He does look to a certain type of individual with whom He can and will work.

Isaiah 66:1 *Thus says the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?*

2) For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, says the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

This contrite spirit is the exact opposite of a haughty arrogant spirit.

Please turn with me to 1 Peter 5, where the Apostle Peter exhorts us to be humble with each other and before our Heavenly Father.

1 Peter 5:5 *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.*

6) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: (KJV)

Please turn with me to Philippians 2, where the Apostle Paul continues this theme of humility to the congregation in Philippi.

Philippians 2:2 *Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

3) *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* (KJV)

Brethren, how much less relationship problems would we have in the Church, or in our marriages, or in our families, or in our friendships and relationships with others, if we would esteem others better than ourselves and if we would be subject to one other, if we would be clothed in humility, and if we would humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father.

Please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 10. Brethren, humble people do not compare themselves to other people. The Apostle Paul warns us about comparing ourselves with others.

2 Corinthians 10:12 *For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.* (KJV)

Comparing ourselves to others is not wise because it gives us a false sense of pride, making us think that we are better than others. Jesus Christ strongly condemned this false sense of pride.

Please turn with me to Job 38. Brethren, if we ever start to think more highly of ourselves than we should, we just need just compare ourselves to the greatest power in the universe. This is the subject of the conversation between God the Father and Job here in Job 38.

Job 38:4 *Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much.*

5) *Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line?*

6) *What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone*

7) *as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?*

12) *Have you ever commanded the morning to appear and caused the dawn to rise in the east?*

13) *Have you made daylight spread to the ends of the earth, to bring an end to the night's wickedness?*

19) *Where does light come from, and where does darkness go?*

- 20) *Can you take each to its home? Do you know how to get there?*
 21) *But of course you know all this! For you were born before it was all created, and you are so very experienced!* [Yehovah is putting Job in his place].
 31) *Can you direct the movement of the stars - binding the cluster of the Pleiades or loosening the cords of Orion?*
 32) *Can you direct the sequence of the seasons or guide the Bear with her cubs across the heavens?*
 33) *Do you know the laws of the universe? Can you use them to regulate the earth?*
 34) *Can you shout to the clouds and make it rain?*
 35) *Can you make lightning appear and cause it to strike as you direct?* (NLT)

Job 40:1 *Then the LORD said to Job,*

- 2) *Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God's critic, but do you have the answers?*
 3) *Then Job replied to the LORD,*
 4) *I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will cover my mouth with my hand.* 5) *I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say.*

We will always be humble when we compare ourselves to our Heavenly Father's glory, to His power, and to His majesty.

Please turn with me to Luke 18. Jesus contrasted two people: one being a leader of the Jewish people, well respected and looked up to by the people; and one being a man despised by the Jewish people and who was looked down upon by them.

Luke 18:10 *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

- 11) *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*
 12) *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*
 13) *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*
 14) *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* (KJV)

Brethren, do we find ourselves feeling puffed by comparing ourselves to other sinners? Do we find ourselves thinking "Well at least I'm not sinning like that other person is sinning!"? Or "Well, I must not be so bad after all!"? Brethren, when and if we starting thinking these thoughts, we know that God the Father will not be pleased.

Please turn with me to Matthew 6. It is human nature to want to be noticed, to want to be exalted, and to want to be praised by others. We all know of people who are glory hounds.

We see them at work in our jobs. We see them at school. We see them in politics. And we can see them at Church. Christ warned about this, because if we do things for show, to be seen of others, then that is our reward.

Matthew 6:1 *Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

2) *Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

3) *But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth:*

4) *That your alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret Himself shall reward you openly.*

5) *And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

6) *But thou, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly. (Continuing)*

Matthew 6:16 *Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

17) *But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face;*

18) *That you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly. (KJV)*

Please turn with me to Matthew 23. Near the end of Christ's ministry, He didn't hold anything back when He was talking about the deceit and the pride of the Pharisees. We read about His scathing condemnation of the Pharisees here in Matthew 23.

Matthew 23:1 *Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,*

2) *Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:*

3) *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not you after their works: for they say, and do not.*

4) *For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

5) *But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,*

6) *And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,*

7) *And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. (KJV)*

Brethren, do we do what we do to be seen by others? Are we willing to serve behind the scenes, where there is no glory, no fanfare, and no public praise? However, God the Father is always watching and He sees everything that we do. He sees every good work.

The perfect example of humility for us to follow is Jesus Christ. Please turn with me to Luke 22. At the Passover, on the last night of His life, Christ taught the disciples about being a humble servant.

Luke 22:25 *And He [Jesus] said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*

26) But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27) For whether is greater, he who sits at meat, or he who serves? Is not he who sits at meat? But I am among you as he who serves.

Christ willingly chose to be a servant, even as He was mocked, ridiculed, spit upon, and abused. His will was to be approved of by the Father and not approved of by men. Christ chose to walk humbly with His Father.

Turn with me to Verse 41 in Luke 22. Again, when Jesus was in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what awaited Him in a few short hours, that He would be mocked cruelly, that He would have to endure the unbearable pain of being whipped and scourged just short of death, and that He would have to be crucified, He still prayed that His Father's will would be done.

Luke 22:41 *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,*

42) Saying, Father, if you be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done.

Jesus humbly submitted to the will of His Father, even when He, as a human, did not desire the outcome. Brethren, do we have that type of relationship with our Heavenly Father, to trust Him that much, to have that much faith in Him, and to walk humbly with Him?

Brethren, do we show true humility in our lives? Do we always have to win? Do we always have to have the last word? Can we just allow others to win the argument or the disagreement?

How much stronger would our friendships and relationships be if we didn't insist on having the last word? How much stronger would our marriages be if we just let our spouse "be right"? How much stronger and more unified and more peaceful would the congregations be if we let another brother or sister "win" instead of ourselves?

True humility is shown and developed when we come to the point that we are happy and that we truly rejoice when other people win, when other people are blessed, when other people are praised, when other people receive credit, and when good things happen to other people. Even at a time when we may not be receiving the blessing we want, the praise we want, the credit we want. Even when it seems that bad things are happening in our own lives. Are we at that point in our spiritual lives that we have this depth of humility, brethren?

So brethren, let's strive to walk humbly with God the Father.

Brethren, in 61 days from tonight (just a little over two months from now), we will be observing and partaking of the Passover. During the weeks ahead, let us strive to improve our relationships with others in the congregations. Let us strive to improve our relationships with our husbands and wives and family members. And let us strive to improve our relationship with our Heavenly Father and with our elder brother, Jesus Christ. Let us strive to live righteously and exhibit the righteous example to others of the ambassadors of Jesus Christ that we are. Let us strive to show compassion and mercy to others in our actions, in our words, and in our attitudes. Let us strive to put out the puffed-up spiritual leavening in our lives so that God the Father can use us more abundantly. Brethren, time is short, and with all that is happening that we see going on in the world around us, time is quickly getting shorter and shorter.

Brethren, let us strive to deepen our resolve to implement the actions of Micah 6:8 more completely in our lives: to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before our God.

Brethren, let us pray that we see our Heavenly Father more clearly, that we love our Heavenly Father more dearly, and that we follow our Heavenly Father more nearly, Day by Day.