

OAK HILLS MISSION

Part 1 - Respond through Authentic Worship & Godly Living

TEXT: MICAH 6:6-8 (ESV)



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Oak Hills' Mission

Oak Hills' mission is to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the whole world, equipping individuals and families to:

- learn to know and enjoy God;
- **respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living;** and
- lead others to do the same —all by the grace of God and all for His glory.

What this Series is and isn't About

Continuing in our study of Oak Hills' mission statement, as seen through the lens of God's holy, inerrant, all-sufficient word, we come to our call to proclaim the whole Gospel equipping the people of the church to **respond to God through authentic worship & godly living**. Few things give me greater satisfaction than talking about worship. Worship is a chief value for us as a church because it is our highest, most holy calling. It is what we were created to do for all eternity—actively delighting in the Maker and Lover of our souls as His holy, dearly loved people.

Today's subject compels me to say a word about why we're doing this series. It is vital for Oak Hills to know what Scripture calls the church on earth to be about. This is the aim of this series as well as our aim as a congregation. Now, I need to clarify what I mean by "Church." Not every institution that calls itself a church is a church in the Biblical sense. Denominations which have either rejected or never embraced in the first place the lordship and divinity of Christ or the authority of Scripture are not churches in the Biblical sense. Paul's words in Ephesians 5 about Christ being the head of the church, or Jesus' words to the seven "churches" in the book of Revelation teach us that you are not a true church if Christ is not your head. When I speak of the church, I mean only those congregations yielded to the Lordship of Christ and under the authority of Scripture.

I said earlier that the content of this series isn't all that novel or distinct to Oak Hills. We are not spending these eight weeks trying to show how Oak Hills is in some way better than any other congregation faithful to the Lord and His word. This series isn't an advertisement showing you why our product beats our competitors. That idea opposes every teaching on the unity of the Body of Christ we hold so dear. This series is an opportunity for this local church, with all our ways and oddities and people with all their gifts, passions and personalities, to consider what it means for each of us to live as members of Christ's church on earth—personally and as a congregation.

Authentic Worship & Godly Living

Today's short text, through which we'll unpack our tandem call to worship and godliness, ends with one of the more quoted verses in all the Bible—Micah 6:8. When we talk about responding to God through authentic worship and godly living, we aren't talking about two mutually exclusive objectives. True worship and godliness are inseparable. Why? Because worship isn't the occasional bowing of a disconnected people to an unknown deity who is hidden by his disinterest in us. Worship is communing with God, delighting in Him. It isn't a thing we do on occasion. It is a way of being—living all of life as people following after our Savior and God.

In college I spent a semester in Jerusalem. I slept in a big room in the center of campus that used to be the student union. It was a high traffic area. One day I saw my roommate Landy and a young lady from our college back home in our room talking. She had her back to me. I thought I heard her laughing, so I thought it would be funny if I snuck up on her and scared her. I got down low on the floor and crept as quietly as I could. I got within 3 feet of her before I realized she wasn't laughing. She was sobbing. Unsure what to do, I stood as quick as I could, hoping she wouldn't see me, pretending to act casual, which was also weird since she was so upset. *(She was homesick.)*

Have you ever entered a conversation thinking it is light, only to discover it is the gut-wrenching breaking of a heart? On its own, Micah 6:8 is a wonderfully instructive verse—one of those doctrinal summaries you can hang many thoughts on. It can stir the complacent and calm the anxious. But the context in which these words were first given is as instructive for our application of them as the words themselves. If we were to creep into the occasion when Micah 6:8 was first uttered, we'd discover in a hurry how sober was its context. We like the sound of the verse, but these words were delivered in an intense moment.

But though these familiar words might have come in a context we didn't expect, it is nevertheless a context we are all familiar with. We need to hear them in their context, that we might hear what they tell us about the connection between worship and godly living. Let's back up to verse 6, and then discuss it.

Micah 6:6-8

⁶"With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
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?"

⁸He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

What Do You Want From Us?

One of the most precious truths we hold dear is our conviction from Scripture that God wants and has done everything necessary for His people to live in intimate relationship with Him. Christian worship is not some pagan ritual of shoveling meat into the belly of a lifeless idol to appease an ambivalent god in exchange for prosperity. Worship is a call to delight in our loving, gracious Father. But when we forget who God is and who we are in this relationship, we exchange true worship for idolatry. We see it in our text. Let's see how it happens.

The book of Micah, like Malachi which we studied last year, shows God's people demanding that God give an account of Himself for the ways He has dealt with them. They feel beat up, overlooked and unimportant to God. After wars and famines, they believe God has burdened them beyond reason. Their question is one maybe you have asked God yourself: "What do you want from us?" Verses 6-7 of our text express that question.

As Micah unfolds, we find God's people have gone against what He has called them to be and do. They've embraced idols ^(1:7, 5:12-14) and stolen land. ^(2:2,9) People in authority have abandoned the cause of justice ^(3:1-3) and spiritual leadership. ^(3:11) They have become a violent, corrupt nation. ^(6:10-12) Life has not gone well for them, but despite their wandering from the precepts of the Lord, they believe their complaint against God is legitimate. They are frustrated. Life has been hard, and God's blessing appears to have passed them by. So in their minds, regardless of their conduct, God is failing them, and they demand answers.

This is a familiar story, not only in Scripture, but among God's people since the establishment of the Church. We act as though God is obligated to bless us as we believe we should be blessed, regardless of whether or not we've followed His Word. When He doesn't bless, we wonder why He doesn't acknowledge the trials we've endured as somehow making us worthy of a little blessing here and there. We shake our fists at the sky, demanding, "What do you want from us!?" Make no mistake, this is the right question. And our text provides an answer. But the problem with the complainant in the text, as with us so often, is we already think we know what He wants—He wants us to pay our dues. And we feel we already have. Look at the text again.

"What shall I bring?" he asks. A burnt offering? This is costly. Most offerings would end with a portion of the meat returned to the worshipper for his family to eat. But for burnt offerings, the entire offering was consumed, leaving nothing behind. Is that what God wants? How about year old calves? This is the most valuable calf a person could offer because it is the oldest and biggest a calf can get while still being considered a calf. What about thousands of rams? Would that be enough? Maybe 10,000 rivers of oil? Would that finally draw from God His blessing?

At this point, the complainant knows he has entered the absurd. If a burnt offering isn't enough, what is? He presumes a burnt offering should be more than enough. But continuing on with the absurd price, what about his firstborn son? Surely he is supremely more valuable than calves or rivers of oil. One commentator noted that this might have been an indictment against God as an ironic reference to the pagan practices of the Canaanites to offer up their sons as sacrifices to their god Molech. ^(2 Kings 3:27, 16:3) Does God want them to offer their sons to Him as the pagans do—"the fruit of my body for the sins of my soul?" Surely not! God didn't even demand that of Abraham!

For the complainant, worship is an economy to satisfy a distant god. This kind of worship is just a means to an end, sacrifice for blessing—finding the right buttons to push to get God to dispense stuff we want and remove stuff we don't. Is this you? Beloved, examine your hearts. The complainant is trying to coerce God to behave like an idol so he can manage God on his terms—essentially claiming for himself the place of God, as though God must become subject to his system of worship. This is the very definition of idolatry. Idolatry doesn't demand we worship a foreign god. It also comes when we try to bring our God into our temple, conforming Him to how we think worship should go. We become Lord, He becomes our subject.

We Respond For He Has Told Us

What does God require? Micah answers. First he says, "He has told you," denying the complainant the right to claim ignorance. We tread dangerous ground when we try to "reinvent" worship. For generations, by unfolding His word, God has told us what He requires. Next he says God has told us what "is good and what the Lord requires." Note two things. First, **God** is the One who requires of man. It is not the place of the people to dictate what God should accept from man in worship. Second, what the Lord requires is **good**. It isn't lacking. What does God want from us? What does true worship and godly living look like?

- **DO JUSTICE:** Uphold the Law God has given—not only for ourselves, but on behalf of others as well. When you are in a socially superior position, step in and help the weak and those suffering oppression. As with the good Samaritan, we are called to care and act on behalf of the weak. He means to use His people as His agents of justice in this world.
- **LOVE KINDNESS (OR MERCY):** Another expression for this is "loving kindness." We should extend grace and generosity to those in need. Notice we're not just told to do this. We're called to **love** this. Worship and godliness are not things we do so much as they are the kinds of people we are.
- **WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD:** Remember who we are in relationship to God. We don't command Him. He commands us. We do not establish or preserve our relationship with Him. He does that with us, by His mercy. We see this beautifully in the word "your." We are called to the pursuit of bringing our lives into conformity with the will of our God.

In our mission statement, we regard worship and obedience together as a **response**. We don't create a relationship with God through them. They are a response to the relationship He has already given us. And you can't separate worship from godly living because, "worship is not a matter of outer attitudes, but the inner dispositions of heart and spirit. ^(Jn 4:24) Those who have experienced and responded to God's love will show that in conformity to His will. ^(Jn 14:23) As they reflect on what God has done for them in love ^(1 Jn 4:10) their inner devotion will reveal itself both in a life of obedience and in worship that magnifies God." ^(MacKay, 120-121)

Our sacrifices, so long as they remain disconnected from our hearts, will always be too small because God doesn't delight in sacrifices. He delights in His people. God wants us connected in every aspect of our being to a life in pursuit of what pleases Him for no other reason than nothing brings us greater joy than following Him. Our godly living is our worship when everything we do in response to God is because we love living in the center of His will. May we love the things God loves. May we love Him. And may this define our worship and our lives.