



## YOU'VE BEEN TOLD

By Rev. Will Nelken

---

*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, CA, on Sunday, March 5, 2023*

There is an inscrutable drive within the hearts of men and women... a thirst to know what is true... a longing to be loved... a hunger for meaning and purpose.

In the recent film, “Jesus Revolution,” Pastor Chuck Smith finds himself across the breakfast table from a Christian hippie (an oxymoron as far as the pastor was concerned), Lonnie Frisbee, asking what all those hippie kids were looking for. Lonnie responded, “They’re searching for God... just in all the wrong places.”

From early childhood, something within each of us longs to shape, rather than be shaped by the streams of culture—to contribute something to someone, somewhere. To be a producer, not just a consumer.

No matter how gifted, how talented, or how popular we may be, that quest runs just below the surface of everything else. We may wonder, “If I disappeared, would anyone notice?”

A pervasive sense of inadequacy and its accompanying dejection blows against the world’s population, as unstoppable as the wind.

Where can we find God’s promised *shalom*—that peace that arises and settles in safety, well-being, prosperity, tranquility, and completeness?

The Bible’s answer to that quest was articulated by an ancient Jewish prophet, Micah:

*Micah 6:8* *He has told you, O man, what is good;*

*And what does the Lord require of you,*

*But to **do justice**, to **love kindness**,*

*And to **walk humbly with your God?***

Simple. Just three things.

- “Do justice.” Do the right thing.
- “Love kindness.” Be kind to others.
- “Walk humbly with your God.” Be faithfully obedient.

Just three things.

But you do not do them. Not consistently. You cannot. The desire is there, but the ability to perform, to pull it off, is not.

Paul, an apostle of Christ and master missionary, transparently revealed his own struggle in this arena:

*Romans 7:18* *And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. I want to do what is right, but I can't. <sup>19</sup> I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.*

That would be discouraging were it not for the end of that same chapter, when he proclaimed his victory, *"But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Romans 7:25). This he continued in the next verses (8:1-2), *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death."*

Yet, it's a divine mandate. It's what God expects of each one of us. He *requires* them of us.

*"To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."*

**To do justice:** This requirement defines the manner in which you relate to others—justly. It has to do with honesty; not lying, not deceiving, not shading the truth, and not seeking advantage over others. It is about fairness—plain speech, fair measures, and a level playing field. It concerns honor and respect for others, not lording over them. It's just the way you hope others will relate to you; nothing more.

**To love kindness:** This is the core of your relationship with God, for He has shown each of us such extraordinary kindness and pours His love into our hearts, but it also has to do with your treatment of others. It means to live in God's favor—receiving His full forgiveness and recognizing that His love toward you is faithful, no matter the circumstances—and then to extend mercy to others, as God has extended it to you. Kindness goes beyond what is required or demanded; it is relational generosity.

**To walk humbly with your God:** This has to do with a lifestyle of obedient responsiveness to God. It focuses on partnership with Him, working together to accomplish His will. It emphasizes a harmonious relationship with Him—a loving child with the Father. It also represents the empowerment that results from the ongoing connection—His power, working in and through you.

Just three things. The way of living to which God calls us is one of simplicity—so all can understand and follow. It’s all right here. Nothing more is needed. In this way, Jesus distilled all the Law and the Prophets down to two commands: Love the Lord and love your neighbor. Then He simplified it further, saying, *“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you”* (John 15:12). One thing.

Mark this: this life with God can neither be achieved, nor enjoyed, in solitude. Although every individual must choose it for himself or herself (for God has only firstborns, no grandchildren), it cannot be reached individually. The very nature of this life—this *shalom*—is relational and communal.

And, alas, this is also its highest hurdle. It seems so much more possible on one’s own—without resistance or control by others—but in truth, it is altogether unattainable without learning the hardest lesson of all: how to truly love one another.

The Church is not an afterthought, but the core of God’s plan from the beginning, when He said to the first man and woman, *“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth”* (Genesis 1:28).

While we long to be loved, God knows that desire can only be fulfilled as we love others. To give ourselves away to others. God has made us for that.

Jesus Christ has shown us that (in the words of Paul):

*Phil 2:3 Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

*<sup>5</sup> You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*

*<sup>6</sup> Though he was God,  
he did not think of equality with God  
as something to cling to.*

*<sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;  
he took the humble position of a slave  
and was born as a human being.*

*When he appeared in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God  
and died a criminal’s death on a cross.*

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor  
and gave him the name above all other names,*

*<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*<sup>11</sup> and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

(That's a passage you would do well to commit to memory in whatever Bible translation is your favorite: Philippians 2:3-11.)

Do justice; love kindness; walk humbly with your God.

This last—the third element—is the greatest of them all. For apart from Him, we can do nothing. It's like the old song says:

Without Him, I can do nothing  
Without Him, I'll surely fail  
Without Him, I would be drifting  
Like a ship without a sail

But with Him, I can do all things  
With Him, I will prevail  
With Him, all things are possible  
For Jesus never fails

Here is where we must begin our journey to wholeness. Jesus has come for us; now we, in turn, must come to Him.

Everyone knows how to come to Him for help—we just cry out to Him: “Jesus, please help me!” But the Creator Himself longs to extend His wholeness through a relationship with those He has created. His love for us cannot be satisfied apart from us. He has made us for Himself.

He has created you with an empty space inside that suits Him perfectly. Saint Augustine wrote in his Confessions, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” We might call it RHS—Restless Heart Syndrome. If anything brings us satisfaction, it lasts but a short while before we begin looking for something more, something else.

Jesus Christ is the cure. His forgiveness frees the heart to sing, to laugh, and to love. He said, “*Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends*” (Revelation 3:20). Do you hear Him calling? Have you opened the door and invited Him in? If not, pause and do so right now...

*Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner. You paid my debt on the cross; I receive the Father's forgiveness. He raised You from the dead; I receive Your everlasting life. You sent Your Spirit to be my Comforter and Guide; I welcome His presence into my heart. Lead me in Your way—to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with You for the rest of my life. Let Your words light my path. I thank You, my Savior.*

You've opened the door. You've let Him in. Now, enjoy His presence. Enjoy a meal together. Get to know Him as your Friend. You will learn, in time, to walk humbly with your God.

As a result, His power will begin to work together with yours to multiply your possibilities and opportunities to "do justice" and "love kindness." The more you focus on the main thing—walk humbly with your God—the more help and joy you will find in doing justice and loving kindness.

Paul added this conclusion to the tribute to Jesus that I shared a bit ago:

*Phil 2:12* **Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. <sup>13</sup> For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.**

You don't walk this path alone, not ever. "God is working *IN* you." All that you need He will provide. When He prompts your desire, you may trust that the requisite power is also there for you to obey (even if you feel no different).

So... post these words over the door of your heart:

*Micah 6:8* **He has told you, O man, what is good;  
And what does the Lord require of you,  
But to do justice, to love kindness,  
And to walk humbly with your God?**

In case you've been wondering why I might share a message of life essentials from an ancient prophet, like Micah (and a minor prophet, at that), I'm not the first to sense the primal quality of his words.

Paul also preached Micah's message:

*Ephesians 5:9* **(for the fruit of light is found in all that is *good and right and true*).**

And none other than Jesus appealed to Micah's words as spiritual bedrock:

*Matthew 23:23* **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: *justice and mercy and faithfulness*; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.**

I've read somewhere that "a triple-braided rope is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Now, you've been told. So, go and do likewise, in the power of the Holy Spirit.