

Micah 6:1-8  
Psalm 15  
1 Corinthians 1:18-31  
Matthew 5:1-12

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Allentown, Pennsylvania; Durham, North Carolina; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Columbus, Ohio—the list goes on, and on until we get to the most recent places: Monterey Park, California, and Half Moon Bay California. My friends, this year we have *already* had **39** separate mass shootings in our country, just in the month of January.

If it offends you that I stand up here and say this to you, it should. It **is** offensive. It should offend you that we allow one another to be killed in this way. It should offend you that it is so *easy* for this to happen. It **should** offend you. And we have to keep being offended, my friends, because these shootings are happening so often now, that we risk becoming numb to them. God weeps for our callousness toward one another. We cannot become numb to this violence. And we have to do better.

The prophet Micah tells us what *God* asks of us: “And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Almost 3,000 years ago, he was talking to the people of Israel about the injustice that they were perpetrating against one another, presenting his case like a trial lawyer. Micah reminds God’s people that God chose them especially, and “I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery.” God then gave the people Moses, Aaron and Miriam to lead them and showed them how God wanted them to live.

But they have forgotten the spirit of the Law that Moses gave them. Earlier in this chapter, Micah describes how corrupt the judges have become, and how people are stealing from one another, how they are oppressing the poor, and have become focused on sacrifices and

rituals for the forgiveness of their sins, instead of choosing to act ethically. They are talking the talk, but not walking the walk, forgetting that God's Law is all about justice for the poor and oppressed, kindness towards one another, and humble obedience towards God.

Like the people to whom Micah prophesies, we have many of the same evils in our society. For instance, we know our legal and justice systems are seriously challenged. Tyree Nichols, the 29 year-old man killed recently by Memphis police, is only the most recent example. Again, this is not acceptable. We must not become numb to it, and we must call it what it is: it is **evil**.

At the same time, my friends, we must not allow ourselves to become cynical, or despairing in the face of this evil. We mustn't tell each other that there is nothing we can do, and throw up our hands. There is much we can do. There are groups to help us take action, and government leaders we can galvanize. And locally, we must continue to serve our neighbors in need. That is one of the profoundest ways to fight this evil.

It is tempting to retreat into our relatively easy lives, to try and shield ourselves from the violence that surrounds us. But as Christians we are called to the danger of proclaiming and doing justice, to the foolishness of showing kindness even when our culture tells us to look out for number one. And we are called to show humility by obeying a God who calls us to follow Jesus's way of love. This is our true Epiphany. Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

Amen.