

## **What a Difference the Savior Makes!**

Micah 6 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Grace and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We start our meditation this morning with this question: How would you describe a Christian in this 21 century? That implies ourselves of course, how would you describe yourself? And how does the world describe us a Christians.

The answer will depend on our understanding of the Gospel, our faith walk, and even the denomination we belong to. Unfortunately, much of Christianity in this century has been misunderstood not only by Christians themselves, but by the world around us.

Christianity has changed over the years, lately in these parts of the world, it has become more of political view rather than a way of life, it is known as the “American Christianity,” which was gaining momentum in several countries in the world. It is being used as a tool of theocratic authoritarianism, an article says. That is as if God is personally using the church, the Christian faith to control the political and economical world. However, this kind of Christianity is failing too, and the Christian world getting smaller. No wonder, it is not God’s plan indeed. Nor is liberalism! There is for sure a clash, but those in between those who really want a spiritual life, suffer, so they abandon the church, they don’t get to know God for who he is and Christ their saviour. The hypocrisy of Christians and judgmental teachings of some has become an obstacle for many to receive the life-giving grace of God.

It’s complicated being a Christian these days, isn’t it. Yet, the message, God’s requirements are clear. Didn’t Micah say in his words today: “He 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” that’s how God wants us to live by, and that’s how would the description of a Christian should be.

Simple, isn’t it? But the reality is different. And so is the description of what a Christian should be. But what matters most, is this, how does God see us? Ultimately, our description of how a Christian should be, doesn’t matter as much as how God sees us.

That's what God is doing through Micah the prophet. And this is the result, the prophet says: "Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. <sup>2</sup> Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel. <sup>3</sup> "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!"

The sins of the people brought about this indictment. Later in the same chapter in verse 16, God gives his reason: "For you have kept the statutes of Omri, and all the works of the house of Ahab; and you have walked in their counsels."

The scriptures don't tell us what the statutes of Omri are, but they tell us who Omri was. Omri was king of Israel, he reigned in 8<sup>th</sup> century before Christ. He was the father of Ahab, and founder of a dynasty that remained in power for some 50 years. For his people, and the surrounding nations, extra biblical sources paint him as a dynamic and powerful figure, and he is thought by modern scholars to have been one of the most important rulers of the northern kingdom, Israel. He is known to have conquered Moab, formed an alliance with Tyre, and moved the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria. But in God's word, the indictment is something else: "Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD AND did more evil than all who were before him. <sup>26</sup> For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols." 1 Kings 16:25-26" in other words Omri politicized his faith to gain power, and when it came down to the people in his kingdom, there was no justice, he didn't love kindness, and he didn't walk humbly with.

Now how do we know about this? Later in the same chapter of Micah 6 we read: "The voice of the LORD cries to the city— and it is sound wisdom to fear your name: "Hear of the rod and of him who appointed it! <sup>10</sup> Can I forget any longer the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? <sup>11</sup> Shall I acquit the man with wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? <sup>12</sup> Your rich men are full of violence; your inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth." (Micah 6:9-16)

O, but those people though they were good worshipers, they kept coming to their worship places, bowing before God, they brought their offerings and sacrificed animals

as the law prescribed. But they also worshiped other Gods, they pursued other religions which were brought in for political purposes.

That practice though stayed through generations, even today. But back then God pronounces his indictment, for their corrupt business and religious practices. And make no mistake, he still does today. As you see God is not only concerned about personal morality, but also justice and mercy. God's law is intimately concerned with business practices as per the 8 commandments, through history. Those who engage in corrupt business dealings and try to avoid responsibility by saying, "let the buyer beware" are not only sinning against their fellow man but sinning against God and violating God's laws. Just as Proverbs tells us: "A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight." (Proverbs 11:1)

God's law stood then and still stands today, but so do the Statues of Omri, and remember that God's indictment stands too. For misusing the name of God. For thinking that people are doing the will of by furthering of their political or personal agendas, God's indictment still stands.

But the kind of Christianity to what God call us, and brings us into, is different, it is new, it starts with Jesus Christ and the new life we receive in our baptisms. It is a new life that creates a difference, it is different from the world. It is a blessed estate as the Gospel lessons points out.

This we need to reflect on. And appreciate the changes, the differences Christ operates in us. Notice how you were before and how you are now. Is there in change in your life? I'm not talking about the changes we face in this world. The changes we experience along our days. I'm talking about the changes we experience in our spiritual lives, in our character, in the way we treat our neighbours. In the way we walk with God.

Those of us who have been baptized are changed into made into children of God. And that experienced change produces a big difference, forgetting all other statutes we are welcomed into the blessedness of Mathew 5.

It is in God's plan to make us different, changing that which the world regards little into most valuable people of God. That is what happened to the Corinthians.

The Christians at Corinth were far from desirable, as the world counts desirability. Their education, influence, and birth status were not notable, yet God chose them. Chose them for what? Verses 27, says: "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong." To show the world that there is a way that "seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (Prov. 14:12)

To show the world that there is more to life than just the things we have in this world, the statues of Omri, material possessions, fame, human wisdom and whatever else we die for. One day all of those things will perish. But there is something that never perishes, one thing that is worth sacrificing for, that is a glorious life eternal with your Maker, and that can only happen through the work of Jesus.

Like the Corinthians, our education, our influences, and birth status are not known worldwide, and so we seem insignificant, like a grain of sand, yet God has chosen us, and yet God has revealed to us His plan of Salvation, in Jesus Christ.

Human wisdom, influence, and noble birth are not in themselves bad. But to rank oneself by them in the kingdom of God is to forget who we once were without Christ. It means to hold on to the statues of Omri.

We need to remember that it is easy for us to forget that it is God through Jesus Christ who has done marvelous things for us. It is easy to forget that Jesus paid a price on our behalf as He died on the cross of Calvary. It is easy to forget that He won victory over death, sins and satan, and his victory is ours.

It happened to the Corinthians too. In their congregations there were factions, public adultery, abuse of the Holy Spirit's gifts, abuse of the Sacrament, and false doctrine. And so the statues of Omri, reared its head once again, and yes even in the church.

We are not immune, it can happen to us, too. Maybe not in our midst, but for sure we have heard of things that place Christian far from desirable as God counts desirability. And yet it is important to ask ourselves, do we have factions? Any adultery? What about spiritual adultery? Any wrong ideas about doctrine? Do we neglect the Sacrament? The preaching of His word? Those things happen when we separate ourselves from God. When we boast in our strength and wisdom, rather than

in what God gives us, when we follow the statues of Omri. But thanks be to God that he indeed changes us.

That is why Paul reminds us in his letter to the Christians, to remember our previous state and give thanks to God, because He has come to us to make us different. Yes! It is the work of God in whom we believed “Because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup> so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Because of him now, we can certainly make sense of his desire for us: “He 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”

Have we followed the statues of Omri, even in this century? Have we boasted in ourselves and not in the Lord? Here is his indictment, but also his call, to repent and receive the forgiveness Jesus won for us on the cross. Jesus is here to change us, to make us different, in a world that so desperately needs a change.

The world needs to hear that Jesus changes us for good. He embraces us in his justice and mercy and takes us by the hand to walk humbly with him.

The world needs to hear of the different estate Jesus brings us into: <sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. <sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. <sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Truly, this is God's wisdom at work, his wisdoms that provides salvation and a change in our lives.

In His Name, Amen.