

Series: 6:8@Six:Eight	Reference: Micah 6:8 & various passages	Title: Vision	Date: 10.14.18
Website Writeup:			
Last week we looked at our purpose statement, in short, <i>to follow Jesus</i> , in the context of Micah 6:8, our signature verse for this church. Today we look at our vision statement which says, <i>To live as Jesus did, in word & deed. Awakening others to their own spiritual journey with him - To live as Jesus did.</i>			

Before we get to the sermon today, I want to read you an excerpt from a female leaders words in the Vineyard, who writes...

"I am a survivor of both rape & intimate partner abuse. It took me several years to acknowledge the trauma of my past & it was the Vineyard which first provided that safe space. Until that point, I, much like others, did not report. I feared not being believed. I feared ruining someone's life. I was ruled by the shame I felt & truly believed the assault was a result of something sinful in me.

It was not until I encountered the Vineyard that I began to hear a different message. The topic of rape & sexual assault were not dismissed, but rather there was a space for conversation & support. It was in a Vineyard small group where someone first told me that what had happened to me wasn't my fault. It was the first place where I heard a message of hope & restoration.

I learned how to bring my grief, shame & trauma to the Lord & invite the Holy Spirit to heal me. I entered into true lament over what had happened & I had a community that walked alongside me. And appropriately so, it was that same group where I first told my story publicly, a transformational moment where the power of confession & profession was made real. God used the Vineyard as a site for my healing & I could not be more grateful."

Let's pray Six:Eight is a safe place for survivors in our crowd as this woman's own church was for her. As pastor I've had the honor of hearing some of your stories & praying already with many of you who've been abused verbally, sexually, or physically. Although these stories in the news might seem distant to some, they are not to others. And we are intimately connected to some in our crowd who are reeling due to the words & stories they're hearing, forced to relive their own past personal trauma as a result. Let's be a place where anyone would feel safe to bring their grief, shame & trauma to the Lord & have the Holy Spirit heal them. Our greatest impact on the world out there is what we do in here, in how we love & minister to one another. We should always be prayerful as to what the Lord would want us to do in these situations.

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Last week we looked at our purpose statement - to follow Jesus. We said Micah 6:8, our signature verse for this church, was a response to the Israelites not following God, *He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice (act justly), to love kindness (mercy), And to walk humbly with your God?*¹ We said goodness here is made up of very practical & moral imperatives of acting justly, loving mercy & walking humbly with God.

Today we look at our vision statement which says, *'To live as Jesus did, in word & deed. Awakening others to their own spiritual journey with him - To live as Jesus did.'* Following Jesus & living as he did are a continuation of the same thought.

Let's look at how Jesus lived in Philippians 2:5-8 *⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!²*

My friend Keith was an assistant coach for his daughters soccer team. The head coach didn't show up; Keith didn't know how to coach soccer. So he called his wife & asked if her Saudi University students could help, they loved soccer. Eight Single Saudi Muslim men drove out to the suburbs, showed up early, ran drills over the whole season & were terrific. When the Christian mothers came to pick up their daughters, they pulled Keith off to the side, "Who're these guys?" Keith said, "They're Single Muslim Saudi's." The mothers gasped & there was a barrage of questions, "Would they steal their daughters? Bomb the country? Are they terrorists?"

God's bringing the world full circle from Genesis to Revelation. In the beginning Adam & Eve lived in harmony with God & the world around them. Everything they were intellectually, emotionally, behaviorally & spiritually came under his reign. Literally & metaphorically, they lived naked before Him, ashamed of nothing - a safe space. He gave them purpose in stewarding creation while reflecting His character in intimate relationship. Yet sin entered our world - image, harmony & reflection broken. Now there's fragmentation, war, racism, murder, rape, exploitation & poverty.

Yet hope comes as Jesus brings us full circle back under God's kingdom reign as we live out good works he prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10). We learn to follow Christ *not in the isolation of a homogenous church life - we push outward, embracing all peoples, living reflective of Jesus.* Ephesians 5:1-2 urges us *"...be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us & gave himself up for us, a*

¹ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Mic 6:8). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

² *The New International Version.* 2011 (Php 2:5-8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

fragrant offering & sacrifice to God.” ³ 1 John 2:5-6 says, ⁵ “*But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*” ⁴

Researcher, George Barna, says, “*Focusing on Jesus’ exhortation that His followers must love both God & people with all of their heart, mind, soul & strength - transformed individuals are those who have aligned their intellect, emotions, behavior & spirit with the call & ways of God. In other words, genuine, Christ-driven transformation is four-dimensional.*” People of Spirit & Truth (John 4:24).

Were those Christian mothers reflecting God in their attitude towards the Saudi’s? Loving God & people four dimensionally? No, they reacted out of the feeling of self-preservation. To live as Jesus did in word & deed takes an overturning of our world view. Seeing people as Jesus does & acting accordingly even when risky. Philippians 2 overturns the self-preservation of our humanistic worldview.

We live first & foremost as a citizen of heaven, but also as citizens of America; a kingdom of the world with all its rules & regulations, expectations of how to get ahead, prove yourself & survive, which brings tension to our spiritual journey. The Philippians lived this tension as citizens of God’s kingdom under the Roman Empire.

As a result, Philippians 2 is a word picture of Jesus as king. A model to reflect, different than worldly kings. Years ago we watched Saddam Hussein go from riches to rags. A worldly king feared, amassing power, wiping out anyone in his way, toppled from his throne. Pak Soeharto, in Indonesia, imprisoned & murdered many, also forced out of his 32 year reign. Two kings going unwillingly from riches to rags, disgraced.

The kingdom of God is opposite. Not a kingdom of the sword, amassing wealth, grasping power, subjugation, control, fear, manipulation, guarding self, or rights. It’s compassion, humility, gentility, care, justice, mercy & sacrificial Calvary-like love. Living in Scriptural Truth, bringing freedom from sin, instead of bondage to it. A contrast of two kingdoms. How does one ‘live’ under God’s Kingdom reign, while immersed in a worldly kingdom? Remembering Philippians 2, we look to other passages...

Matthew 20:25-28 ²⁵Jesus called them together & said, “*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*”

Disciples arguing, who’ll be first in the kingdom of heaven - Jesus says that’s not his way. He came to serve, not to be served. To ransom his life for many. As in Philippians,

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Eph 5:1-2). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ *The New International Version*. 2011 (1 Jn 2:5-6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

we're called to emulate him in attitude & service. He contrasts this idea with the world & its rulers who seek to wield *power-over*, but in Christ we practice *power-under*.

As played out in Matthew 26:50-53, ⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus & arrested him. ⁵¹With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out & struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁵²"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father & he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

'Swords away, that's not how I do Kingdom'. Jesus had power he didn't wield.

John 18:33-38, ³³Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus & asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" ³⁴"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" ³⁵"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people & your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" ³⁶Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

Pilate, concerned of a challenge to his worldly kingdom, saw no threat in Jesus...
The essential difference between the kingdom of the world & the kingdom of God is...

The Kingdom of the world = Coercion/Force – behavioral modification by law, or threat of punishment; power-over. The kingdom of the world only has power to institute laws to control behavior. The heart doesn't factor. If you don't steal from me simply because you'd go to jail, it works - but it can't cause you to become *the kind of person* who won't steal; no power to change hearts. It can't make you love the king, only fear him. Hillary Clinton knew this when approached by a supporter who said, "We have to change law to change hearts!" She responded, "That's where you're wrong, law will never change hearts, only inhibit behavior." Behavior does need to be restrained, that's why we have governments, but hearts remain unaffected. Prison never changes a person internally, it only produces better criminals.

The Kingdom of God = Christ-like servant love as seen in Phil 2:5-8; power-under. Characterized by heart transformation, servant-hood, humility, sacrifice & power of the Holy Spirit, who's able to transform hearts by grace through faith in Jesus.

The early Church grew like wildfire in the Roman Empire through suffering Christ-like love for the first 4 centuries - forced to serve from a position of power-under. Then Constantine, the Roman Emperor converts. As a result, in 313ad Christianity's legalized under the Edict of Milan. Christians got their first taste of political 'power-over' others. They thought, maybe all this suffering was only provisional. Now we have Constantine on our side, we can 'enforce' Christianity, legislate morality; seems only logical & right. In 381ad Christianity is declared the official religion & one year later Christians put to death the first 'infidel'; how quickly it digresses.

Is forcing people to believe like you Christ-like, just, merciful, or humble? Is worldly 'power-over' the way to advance the message of Jesus? Of course not. Some say we have to bring America back to God, inferring it had once practiced the 'power-under' love indicative of Jesus. Was that when 6 million blacks were brought over from Africa, 3 million survived the trip & were enslaved for 200 yrs. Was it when 20 million Native Americans were murdered & the remaining members of the Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Seminole, Chickasaw & Choctaw nations had their land taken & were forcibly relocated, having to walk the Trail of Tears in 1831 on which thousands died. It wasn't until June 20th 1995 that the Southern Baptist Convention denounced slavery, the issue they were birthed upon in 1845. Were these, and other such acts in Christian history, Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of the World acts? Kingdom of the world acts for sure. Just because something is done in the name of Jesus, doesn't mean it's reflective of Jesus. We can't expect something of a worldly kingdom which it can't deliver by nature.

God directs us back to the cross constantly, developing our character & witness as a result. How we react to the world reflects Jesus, or not. We're not called to seek power over. It's important we become concerned about living as Jesus did in word & deed before our neighbor with whom we have direct influence. When we feel our rights encroached upon, it's spiritually healthy to avoid the temptation to pick up the sword & wield it back. Rather we want to be Jesus in word & deed, serving in love, as we live in the tension of two opposing kingdoms.

Wesley said, "Orthodoxy, or right opinion, is, at best, a very slender part of religion. Though right tempers cannot subsist without right opinions, yet right opinions may subsist without right tempers. There may be a right opinion of God without either love or one right temper toward Him. Satan is proof of this." (expound) So true. We want to worship in Spirit & Truth, serving the world in Christ-like love.

Someone might feel we have to defend our rights. Jesus says, be careful with that. He guarded the purity of his Kingdom, never mixed the two, laying down his rights, loving people in word & deed. He was out & about, politically unconcerned, although his life & teaching affect politics. His concern was for His Kingdom & whether His people reflected God to others, or not. He says be careful since it's easy to mix the two, fighting for causes *using Jesus' name*, rather than loving people *in Jesus' name*. We expect the Church to be about godly justice, mercy & humility, but we can't expect a worldly kingdom to be so. God's kingdom reign come now in hearts of people - the Church, the safe place, but the world's kingdom will always be somewhat unsafe. However, even when things feel unsafe, faith replaces fear under Jesus' promises (Mt10:28).

Therefore, we take caution not to marry the Kingdom of God with that of the World, since coercion & force are never Jesus' way, nor do they bring heart transformation. Christians don't enjoy the luxury of vilifying others, or refusing to cross lines to show the love of Christ. *In seeking 'power over' instead of serving out of 'power under' we alienate people from Jesus. So, we do our best, in the tension within which we live, by loving our neighbor as best we can. Emulating Jesus in humility. Serving. Caring less about being 'right' & more about being forgiven. Crucifying pride.*

Some good questions to ask ourselves are: what do I spend my time thinking about? Am I filled with fear, or faith? Am I just angry or loving? What if God's love was contingent on me getting it right, or on his emotion towards me? What if God withdrew his love when he was unhappy with me? Have you ever felt someone doesn't deserve love? Since, if love's the most powerful force in the world, withholding it's the most destructive.

Our power doesn't come from grasping at rights, winning arguments, getting ahead, being first, positions of authority, law, manipulation, coercion, being louder, stronger, better at arguing, being served, or withholding love from someone. Our power comes from our unique King, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, worked out in loving action, informed by Truth. That's *Goodness* as seen in Micah 6:8.

Paul says in Galatians 5:6 *'the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.'* Having faith in Jesus, we're not afforded power to condemn, but to love. No matter how often we screw this up, we go back to our model - God come in the likeness of man, not grasping at rights, but laying them down.

Soren Kierkegaard the Danish Philosopher illustrates Philippians 2 with a story of a prince looking for a queen (*Pursuing a Princess*). *One day while the prince was running an errand in the local village for his father he passed through a poor section of the city. As he was passing through, he happened to see a beautiful young maiden. She was poor and lower class, but she was absolutely beautiful. After passing through the village several times, he found he was falling in love with her.*

But he had a problem. How would he go about winning her hand in marriage? He could simply order her to marry him, but he wasn't just seeking a queen. He was seeking a partner. If he coerced her to love him, he would never know if she really loved him for whom he was, or just because of the splendor of his wealth.

So the prince came up with another solution. He took off his kingly robe and put on the garb of a peasant. He moved into the village and began to live among the people. He shared their interests and their concerns, and he talked their language. This was no mere disguise; it was a new identity. Over time, he was able to see the young girl. It wasn't instant, but in time the young woman grew to love the prince. She loved him because he first loved her.

That's the kingdom of God, not grasping at what's rightfully yours, laying aside your pride, serving others with humble, Christ-like, sacrificial love. Acting justly, loving mercy, walking humbly. Real power lies in nothing but following our true King who went willingly from riches to rags & back to riches again via the cross [vs9-11].

Those Saudi students spent the whole semester with no pay, running around Colorado, training & encouraging those girls. By the end of the season though, they were still terrorists in the mothers' minds. Keith convinced the reluctant mothers to bring their precious daughters over to break the fast of Ramadan with the men. When they walked

into the room they witnessed 8 young Saudi men in the kitchen hovering over a boiling pot. One on the phone with his sister in California, "Okay, it's boiling, what do I do now?" Mom hearts melted & in the end, they thought maybe all other Saudi's in America were terrorists, but THESE were good boys & they began to love them. When they were no longer viewed as the enemy, the door was opened for the women to love in word & deed. It takes a lot to break down walls & more than knowledge to live the Christian life - it takes obedience to Jesus, power of the Spirit, living in Truth.

That's why our vision says "To live as Jesus did, in word & deed. Awakening others to their own spiritual journey with him." We don't view others as the enemy, but as fellow human beings whom God loves. It opens the door for relationship through simple acts of kindness - being like Jesus, earning us the voice of witness. God's bringing us full circle to reflect Him. When we can walk in humility before Him, he leads us into life with others, where we learn something of God & everyone's spiritual journey's awakened.

Six:Eight can only provide teaching, training, encouragement & opportunity. We can't make you love God & people. Right opinion can exist without right temper. You partner with God in spiritual formation, allowing the Holy Spirit to influence & inject the Word into your intellect, emotion, behavior & spirit. We need to be witnesses of Jesus, not using his name to angrily further opinions, drive wedges & reinforce fears. True loving evangelism of others by Christians walking in Spirit & Truth is the answer to all our ills, given, transformed people in Jesus, value life. They don't devalue, separate, attack, rape, subjugate, kill, call people derogatory names, or hold them back due to ethnicity.

They exhibit the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. They act in...*love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness & self-control.* (because) *Against such things there is no law.* They act justly, love mercy & walk humbly with God. They follow Jesus & live as he did. Because as 1 John 2:6 said, ⁶ *Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*