

## Walking Humbly With God

Justice, Mercy, Walking Humbly with God: Week 1: John 5:1-21

July 7, 2020

### Welcome/intro/vision

**Delighted to be returning** to live streaming and returning for the first time in 4 months to Woods Charter school

**Our hope is that** being back here opens us up to be able to start to invite small groups of people to join us here for worship live in the next couple of weeks as we continue to live stream our services

Great time to join us, starting a brand new series today

And this series is designed to help us to cut through the noise and anxiety a bit here, mid-summer, 2020

Because the truth of the matter is 2020 has been one wave after the other of dizzying complicated and stressful situations and experiences

And in the midst of a global pandemic and social and political turmoil, there's all kinds of voices coming at us—on the news, on your social media newsfeed, within your family circles, within in your friend group

And if you're like me, you're talking too! Even if it's just the conversations you're having in your own head!

And many of those voices, both external to you and inside of you, are loud. Are anxious. Are angry. Are strong. Are scared. And are in conflict.

And sometimes, it's just too many words, isn't it?

I'm a words guy. And when my kids were little, sometimes I'd be talking with them about something that they did wrong

And I felt it was important for them to understand WHY it was wrong and what the consequences would be if they didn't correct their behavior

and why it mattered to do the right thing and how that was the better way and on and on it went

And at one point one of my kids just looks at me and says, "too many words, daddy."

That might be the story of my parenting career!

The world is extremely, extremely complicated, especially here, summer, 2020

And so there are lots and lots of words coming at us all the time as people try to make sense of it all

And one of the greatest gifts we can get in a season and time when there's so many words  
Is the gift of simple clarity: what really matters? What's really important? Are there some rock-  
solid anchor points that we can orient ourselves by?

Are there some clear simple truths that cut through all the noise like Drano that can help us to  
live wisely and courageously and well in the midst of all that's going on?

*Not simplistic, not ignoring all the complexity*

no one should settle for quick and easy answers summer 2020 when so much is at stake  
and so much is going on that demands thoughtful attention

But what if there are a couple things that are true and strong enough to orient ourselves by SO  
THAT we're better equipped to wade into all the complexity of summer 2020?

In the Old Testament book of Micah, about 700 years before Christ, we're in a situation that's  
similar to what we're experiencing today—LOTS and LOTS of noise!

There are armies marching all around, war threatened constantly  
and the kings who were supposed to serve God and God's people were paying tribute to  
foreign nations to keep them from over-running them  
and building all kinds of alliances to try to fend off rising super-powers.

Meanwhile things internally were in total disarray morally and spiritually  
the wealthy and the elite were exploiting the poor and they LOOKED religious on the  
outside but it had none of what mattered: genuine love for God and genuine love for neighbor

And there were false prophets telling everyone what they wanted to hear  
that God didn't care they were a spiritual and moral disaster and that God was going to  
deliver them no matter what from the armies that were on the move all around them

In the midst of all of this political noise and moral and spiritual noise, God raised up the prophet  
Micah to cut through the noise like Drano.

And he has plenty of very, very hard things to say to the people about how things have gone  
wrong

But at one point as Micah is outlining the charges of God over and against his people he  
offers one of the most wonderfully simple summations of what it means to be God's people in  
the whole Bible

Here are Micah's wonderful, simple words in Micah 6:8, we read these earlier in the service:

**He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?**

**To act justly and to love mercy**

**and to walk humbly with your God.** [repeat, re-frame—what does God want from you, from us, in the midst of everything going on in our world around us?]

In the midst of a swirl of opinions and debate and war all around them, here's what everyone needed to anchor down in, in order to deal with the complexity that faced them

Simple. Wonderful. Powerful: act justly, love mercy, walk humbly WITH God,

There was just one problem: they didn't do it. In spite of how simple and clear it is.

And as a result the nation eventually fell as God's judgment was passed on them

**And then for 700** hundred years after these words were written and captured and were made a part of the Scriptures

People still couldn't do it: act justly, love mercy, and walking humbly with God turned out to be harder than it sounds

It turns out, the Lord required something of us that we couldn't deliver on. And so God sent someone who could

God sends his Son, the Word puts on flesh, and finally, once and for all, does what the Lord requires of us:

at every turn he acts justly, at every turn he loves mercy, at every single turn he is walking humbly with God

And so over these next few weeks, we're going to look at the refreshingly simple and clear call from Micah on what matters most and what postures best position us to deal with the complexities of life here, summer 2020

And we're going to look at a different story each week of how Jesus fulfilled this command. Who does exactly what the LORD requires of us all his days? Only Jesus

To receive the good news that Jesus was perfect not only on his own behalf but for all of us as well.

The grace of God invites us into relationship with Himself through Jesus, with all of our fears and failures and mis-steps and sin

And to receive mercy and forgiveness and grace from the perfect high priest who has made an atoning sacrifice for all of our sins

There is a righteousness that is life-giving for you and for everyone around you

and it is not a self-righteousness but a righteousness that is found in what Jesus has completed that is gifted to each of us

Over these next few weeks, we're going to connect each of the three dots: do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God to how Jesus fulfilled them perfectly

We're doing this so we can better understand what this life looks like

looking at how Jesus did it perfectly BOTH this propels us into glad and joyful worship of Jesus AND it lays a framework for how we might do it ourselves

We're going to re-arrange the order a bit from how Micah lays it out and today we're going to start with walk humbly with your God

And the passage we're going to look at from Jesus's life is found in John 5 and what happens at the beginning of John chapter 5 is that there's a paralyzed man that Jesus meets

And he declares to this man: "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." And at once the man was cured and he gets up and walks

But the twist to the story is it's the Sabbath, the Jewish holy day and nobody's supposed to work on the Sabbath

And there are all kinds of rules and prohibitions in place--Including a prohibition on carrying things!

So the man is carrying his mat and some religious leaders see him: "Hey lawbreaker! It's the Sabbath, you're not supposed to be carrying your mat!"

But the guy says, "This guy just healed me and he told me to pick up my mat and walk. I mean, what else was I supposed to do??"

And the writer John summarizes the religious leaders response as we pick up in John 5:16:

**<sup>16</sup>So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.**

Now, we have a number of people in our community who would say that faith is something new to them or that they're exploring or re-investigating after some time away

And here in this little sentence is something that's really important for my friends who are considering faith as well as all the rest of us and that is this:

Seeing is not believing. Because there's something more fundamental than seeing that shapes HOW you see

**And the thing that** shapes HOW you see things is the convictions and the framework and the presuppositions and paradigms that you bring into any event and that shape what you see and how you see it

**In other words: *whatever* you already believe--that's what you're going to see.**

In this story, the religious leaders had as their primary lens the rules around Sabbath observance.

And their primary grid or criteria to evaluate and process what they saw was whether or not the people around them were living in accordance with those rules

**And as a result**, they came face to face with a man who was crippled for 38 years and who had been healed—a crazy, wonderful miracle

And they couldn't see it. They BELIEVED in their RULES more than anything else—and so they couldn't SEE the miracle. They could only see the rule violation

And seeing the rule violation wasn't inaccurate! It was true! Jesus had, indeed, violated the sabbath commandments that they had generated.

But something better than the RULES had just happened. A miracle! But their prior commitment to the rules as the core of what mattered made them blind to the wonders right in front of them.

See we can't possibly see and take in everything coming at us equally, we have to find ways to filter out some things as more important and other things as less important

what's a threat and what's an opportunity and what's useful and what's good and what's bad—all of that shapes how we see and what we see and what we pay attention to

And if your grid is the Sabbath law, you're going to miss the miracle and focus on the fact that the miracle-worker encouraged people to break the Sabbath law

And if your grid is that the world is a random accident, you're going to see a random collection of atoms and accidents

where I see beauty and wonder and the miracle of an exquisitely and finely-tuned, wondrously constructed world that is so unlikely and so improbable it could only be a work of God

And if your grid is that you're all alone in the world and it's up to you to make something of yourself and figure things out but it's dog-eat-dog and the world is pretty much out to get you

Then you'll look all around you and what you'll see is exactly that kind of world that supports what you already believe, *that's how the world will present itself to you*

And if your grid is that God is at work and is for you, you're going to start to see his fingerprints and see his activity around you

even in the midst of the challenges and pitfalls and real threats that are a part of living in this world

And so much of this is so deeply ingrained in us and in operation in our minds we're not even aware of it

we can't even articulate much of what our individual grids are made of but it affects how we process and experience and see ALL of our lives

And so I want to invite you this morning, mid-summer 2020, in the midst of all the noise and chaos swirling around you to do some work in **naming the make-up of your grid.**

In fact, one of the ways you know what your grid is built out of is simply by asking the question **“what do you see?”**

There are billions of data points coming at you all day long, what stands out to you?

Most of us scan past hundreds of links we ignore and then we click on a very, very small percentage: which links do you click on?

You drive by cars and houses and nature and shops and stores, which ones do you see?

You look right past dozens or hundreds or maybe even thousands of people every day, but some of them register—who do you see?

**What are the threats that you’re most aware of and that most register to you?**

That’s a huge one, that’s what’s driving the religious leaders in this story—they’re afraid of people breaking the religious law and the consequences for the nation if they don’t do the right thing

All of us have some set of things that we’re afraid of and so all of us are looking for solutions or strategies to manage those threats and those anxieties

So another way to come at the make-up of your existing grid is **What solutions or opportunities are most compelling to you?**

If you can start a list of what you see, of what threats most register to you and what solutions or opportunities are most compelling to you, you can start to work backwards to name what your grid is made up of

I’m always coming across stories where following Jesus compels people into wonderful, courageous, crazy, creative solutions to problems that our world is facing

That’s because my grid is that everywhere that Jesus went there was life in his wake and if we’re following Jesus there should be life in our wake, too.

That’s the grid by which I see the world. And so when I look at the world and I look at history, I don’t JUST see that, there are lots of wonderful and creative solutions to problems offered by people who have nothing to do with Jesus

But it shapes how I see the world and it shapes how I want to respond to the challenges and situations that I face

We need to have some idea of what’s making up our grid because our presuppositions and what we already believe about the world and about how it works

shapes what we see and how we see and how we interpret it and how we respond or live in it

**The religious** leaders bring the belief with them that the Sabbath law matters more than the healing of a man who has been an invalid for 38 years

And that shapes what they see, how they see it, and it drives them to reject Jesus

But the religious leaders aren't the only ones who come to the situation with a presupposition  
Jesus has his own presuppositions, his own grid

And in response to the religious leaders who are mad at him for healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus starts to articulate his grid, the thing that makes him to see the world so very differently and that compelled him to do things that nobody else was doing

And at the center of Jesus's grid was the fulfillment of the command from Micah 6—this posture of walking humbly with God. Here's what Jesus says:

***<sup>17</sup> In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." <sup>18</sup> For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.***

***<sup>19</sup> Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. <sup>21</sup> For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.***

**About 13 years** ago now I was facing a major life choice—my wife and I were pregnant with our third kid and the car that we loved did not have room for a third car seat

**And true confessions: I hated minivans, I though it was a sign of a man who had given up on ever coming close to being cool but in spite of** all my attempts to avoid it, I was going to have to succumb to the dreaded minivan

And I did a little research and found that Honda Odyssey's were the popular level gold standard and then embarked on a journey to find a used one that I could afford—constantly culling the internet for used Honda Oddysseys

**And as I was in the** throes of that research, what did I suddenly now see everywhere I went all around me? Honda Oddysseys.

They were always there, I wasn't making them up, but my grid was now tuned into Honda Odysseys and so I now saw them every time they made an appearance

And eventually we bought a Honda Oddyssey and now I am a PROUD minivan driver, it's my swagger wagon!

What I experienced with the Honda Odyssey for a few weeks, Jesus experienced his whole life with God his good Father

His internal grid was so finely tuned to God the Father, that's how he lived out the call to walk humbly with his God

Here in this brief interaction he lists out **the key internal presuppositions and beliefs for a life of walking humbly with God [What Jesus believed that led him to fulfill walking humbly with God]**

Before Jesus got out of bed each morning, each one of these was locked in and shaped how he faced his day, how he treated people, how he experienced all of his life

1. **God got there first:** Jesus here says that everywhere he goes, God his Father always got there first and is already at work: ***"My Father is always at his work to this very day"*** No matter what else is happening, no matter what challenges or obstacles or problems. God the Father is always, always, always at his work to this very day.

Every day of Jesus's life, he woke up assuming that God got there first and was at work in some way, shape or form all around him.

This was Jesus's permanent Honda Odyssey experience! Everywhere he went he saw God the Father at work!

2. **God had already shown him and was going to show him what he was doing.**

***"...the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."*** Every day Jesus was confident not only that the Father got there first and was already moving

Every day Jesus was confident that God the Father loved him and would show him all that he does.

There's two ways this plays out:

1. **The vast majority of what we need to know about what God is up to is no mystery - he's already told us about in the Scriptures**

He gives us about 90% of what that God's purposes and plans and what he's up to and how we can be a part of it in our daily lives in Scripture:

don't steal, love your neighbor, pray, worship

faith, hope, love, wisdom, courage not pride, ambition, apathy, cynicism or fear

God is about reconciling people to himself and to each other and so WE are to be about reconciling people to God and to each other, especially across dividing lines in our culture like race

We're to act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God

All of that covers about 90% of daily life

## 2. An important +/- 10% revealed in real-time

That 10% is huge and it matters disproportionately—stuff like should I take that job, should I marry that person, big life stuff

**Now this part is tricky** in part because Jesus is the unique Son of God and I think there's a way that Jesus had access in a particular or special way to what the Father was up to

We don't know the mind of God or see the will of God or the movement of God as clearly or as thoroughly as he does

And there are experiences we have in our lives where we don't get what God's up to, we don't understand why this happened, there doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason or point

But I do believe that Jesus shows us and tells us that the Father also loves you and me. And I do believe that the same Father who showed Jesus what he was up to

Will also show up and show us what we need to see, even if we don't see everything right away or even if we don't get all the answers exactly how we'd like to

God tells us to walk humbly WITH him. Which means he's committed to meeting us along the way and showing us where he's working

He gives us 90% of what we need in the Scriptures to walk with him, and in the rest of life we're invited and called to live by the Spirit, paying attention, cultivating prayerful hearts and watchful eyes

BELIEVING that he got there first, BELIEVING he's always working just like Jesus did, which frees us to then SEE his working around us, even if we have to wait a while to see it.

**Jesus's default**, baseline beliefs were 1. God got there first and is at work in some way, shape or form and 2. God will show me what he's doing

And then the final core commitment that Jesus carried with him was: **3. Whatever God's up to, I've pre-decided I'm all in:**

*"...whatever the Father does the Son also does."*

He wasn't going to see what God was up to and THEN decide if he wanted to do it

Whatever he saw God his good Father up to, that's exactly what Jesus was pre-committed to doing, he had pre-decided to cast his lot in with his good Fathers

Was God making it clear that there needed to be a hard conversation with his disciples? He was in. Touching someone nobody else is touching? I'm doing it.

Going to a party at the wrong person's house and have everyone say nasty things about me? Not even a decision

Teaching people who are confused and lost until past dinner time? Glad to.

Doing something that might anger the authorities around me? If that's what God's up to, then I'm all in.

Jesus woke up every morning having already pre-decided that whatever the Father was up to, he was going to be up to, too

God got there first, God will show me what I need to see, whatever God's up to I'm all in

**Those are the** three core beliefs and commitments and presuppositions that propel Jesus and that lead him to fulfilling one portion of the command God gave to Micah about 700 years earlier

What does God require of us? Do justice, love mercy, AND to walk humbly with God, our good Father

Now there's a mistake we might make when we talk about walking humbly

that it's weak, soft, nice, small, that we have to shrink and get really small to do this walking humbly with God thing

But walking humbly with God didn't make Jesus smaller, it made him loom larger than any other human being in history.

Walking humbly with God made him more bold among people. More courageous.

He wasn't hung up on all the little things that don't matter like what other people think about you, like position and status and money and all the petty things so many of us get hung up on

Which freed him to do magnificent things, great things

and finally it freed him to do the one thing that has captured human imagination so greatly that it's the story that almost all of our great stories tell

from much of Shakespeare and Milton and Tolstoi to Harry Potter to Lord of the Rings to Joe versus the Volcano—the story of one person laying down their lives for the sake of everyone else

Because when you wake up every day and declare: 1. God got here first. 2. God has already shown me much of what I need to be doing and will show me what I need to see. 3. And whatever God's doing, I'm pre-deciding I'm all in

That grid, those beliefs that set you up to walk humbly with God—

And when you do that, there's no telling where that might lead you and what God might do with you

**Today's Take-W.I.T.H.**

1. **Can you name your current beliefs and “grid” that shape what you see and how you see it?** Remember: seeing is not believing; what you believe is going to shape what you see and how you see it.

a. **What do you tend to notice?** What are the headlines or stories that capture you?

b. **What are you afraid of?** What are the conversations you have in your head, the worries that keep you up at night, the threats that gnaw at you?

Another way to think about this: what are the regrets that you have or the things you feel ashamed of?

c. **What opportunities or solutions capture your imagination?**

Some of us love coupons, others of us love to start new business, some of us give hundreds of volunteer hours with org’s we love

We’re drawn to any given political party or person because we think they offer the most compelling answers to the problems we face or have the best chance to lead us to a better future.

These aren’t all bad, there’s probably lots of good in how you’re answering these questions

But this morning as we’re talking about what God requires of us, this simple, clear, direct call in the midst of the sea of noise and debate and anxiety

There’s an invitation:

2. **Swap out your current beliefs and grid for the ‘walking humbly with God’ grid:**

a. **God got here first**

b. **God has shown me and will show me what he’s up to**

c. I’m pre-deciding that **Whatever God is up to, I’m all in**

**2 MINUTES REFLECTION**