

WHAT THE LORD REQUIRES OF US

He has shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what does Jehovah require of thee, but to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to humble thyself to walk^o with thy God?
Micah 6:8

In the passage from the prophet Micah before us, the Lord is very specific about the things which He requires from us. He was also specific about the things which are not required. First He told us how much He resents sacrifices, burnt offerings and other signs of external worship which are not connected with the internals. Then He gave us the three things required.

Three things. Just three things. Do judgment. Love mercy. Walk humbly with your God.

We shall talk now about each of the three things required for true worship. Before we start, we should try to define what is meant by “true worship.”

We know from *New Jerusalem and Heavenly Doctrine* 129 that “the Lord desires worship from man for the sake of man's salvation, and not for the sake of His own glory.” We also know that “worship itself consists in a life according to the precepts of the church from the Word.” It is a clear, precise and useful instruction. The Lord actually told us, in a form accommodated to our comprehension, what is required for true worship. He told us, and repeated it many times, that worship is truly effective only if a man is in love and charity. People are in love and charity if they are living a life based on goodness. Living a life of goodness means: actually doing good deeds from a love for the Lord and a love for the neighbor. This leads to happiness, salvation and eternal life.

The quality of worship, according to the same passage in *New Jerusalem and Heavenly Doctrine*, and also *Arcana Caelestia* 2190, comes from willing and doing good. And what does it say in the passage from the prophet Micah we are dealing with today? “He has showed thee, O man, what *is* good.” The Lord does not only tell us, He actually shows us what good is, and what it means to “do judgment.”

How does He show it? He shows it by numerous examples in the Word. He shows it by His own love and mercy. He shows it by actually coming to earth and glorifying His human. He shows it by His own actions while He was in the world. The Lord continues to show us, over and over, everything we need to know. He instructs us and confirms that what comes from Him is the Divine truth. He teaches us ways of living worship, upon which a church is to be established. Every time we feel delight by doing something which helps the Lord in His work, we learn a valuable and useful lesson.

Nevertheless, people keep on asking the same question: what does the Lord require from us? Sometimes He even gives straight answers, as in the words of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Luke .

In the Gospel of John¹, the disciples ask Jesus: “What shall we do that we may work the works of God ? He answered, It is the work of God that ye believe in Him whom the Father hath sent.”

To “do judgment” is to do right things. It is important to know that “judgment” in the Word is predicated of truth.

We read in the *Arcana Caelestia* 9857: "Judgment" means Divine truth and the intelligence derived from it, consequently it means doctrine and life according to doctrine." To “do judgment,” therefore, means to do good deeds from understanding and acceptance of the Divine truth and the doctrine derived from it. To “do judgment” means to obey the Lord’s commandments and to live a life of charity.

According to the *Scriptural Confirmations* 68: “Charity is to do rightly in every work, and no more.”

It is not **the kind** of good work we do, it is **the way** we do it. That should be enough. More than that is simply not required.

¹ Chapter 6, Verses 28-29

Do rightly in every work, and no more.

The second requirement is: “Love mercy.”

Mercy is also connected with charity. As we read in *Arcana Coelestia* 6180:

Mercy is an expression of love, for one who has love or charity also has mercy, and his love and charity become mercy when his neighbor is poor or in misery and he comes to that neighbor's aid while he is in that condition. This is why mercy means the good of love.

Mercy is the **effect** of love toward the needy and miserable. As any man can become needy and miserable, mercy is, in other words, the effect of love toward the neighbor.

According to *Arcana Coelestia* 5132:

The reason “mercy” means charity is that all who have charity have mercy, that is, all who love their neighbor are merciful towards him. This also explains why the Word describes the practice of charity as acts of mercy, as in Matthew:

I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to me. Matt. 25:35, 36.

We are in charity if we desire the welfare of our neighbors, if we are having **affection** for what is good. This is what “to love mercy” means: to **find delight** in doing something good to the neighbor. In true mercy, there has to be affection for goodness. This affection also consists in feelings of mercy for those in distress. To love mercy means not to be indifferent to the pains of a neighbor. This can be done only if we acknowledge that all the mercy is from the Lord. The Lord requires that we love the infinite mercy which is in Him. The infinite mercy which is ready and willing at all times to love and do good to every one in need. And this means: every one.

The third and last requirement “To walk humbly with thy God” brings us back to the definition of true worship. To walk with God means to live according to His precepts, which are the precepts of the church from the Word. Worship is truly effective only if a man is in love and charity. This means that he is living a life based on goodness. The only way a man

can do this is through humility. Because to a heart truly humbled, nothing of love of self stands in a way.

A man with true humility in his heart is free. He is free to do as many good things as he pleases. For a person to be in humility means to acknowledge in his heart that only God is good, and that in the Divine there is nothing but good. Accordingly, to be truly humble means to acknowledge that in our self there is nothing but evil, and that out of self we can do nothing of good. This situation changes significantly if we “humble our self to walk with the Lord.” The one who “walks humbly with the Lord” never puts himself above his neighbors, does not judge others and does not despise anyone. “To walk humbly with the Lord” means that we never turn our back to the Lord. It is not possible to “walk” with anybody if our back is turned to him. “To walk humbly with the Lord” also means to work **with** the Lord. To **help** the Lord in His Divine works toward our own regeneration and salvation.

There are many jobs in the Lord’s office. In fact, the Lord has a job for every single one of us. This job is to help Him help us to be saved and get to heaven: a place of order, happiness and mercy. There is a tremendous number of ways to help the Lord. They are all out there, at our disposal. They are easy to find. If we want to find them, we shall find them.

Another question is: what is the best way to help the Lord? Should we do whatever it is that we do alone, or together with others? The answer is: yes. In other words, we can and should help the Lord by ourselves, but it can be done even better if we do it together.

When we do that, we are joined together in true worship.

Amen.

Lessons:
Micah 6:6-8
Luke 3:10-14
AC 9409.3