

Sixteen years ago OJ Simpson's defense attorney Johnny Cochran coined a new idiom: "**If the glove don't fit, you must acquit!**" For those of you who don't remember OJ's very famous trial—or for those of you who were not yet born in 1995—the prosecutor asked OJ to put on a glove that had been found at the scene of his wife's murder. Not to be too gory about it, but the glove was caked with dried blood. Did the glove fit? Johnny Cochran convinced a jury that the glove did NOT fit and won an acquittal for his client. Did OJ get what he deserved? I don't know the answer to that, but I DO know that WE don't get what we deserve from God. WE are acquitted when we deserve to be found guilty. We are saved against all reason. In our case **the glove fits—the charges against us fit—all too well.**

And after reading today's Old Testament lesson I am convinced that **we** need a skillful Advocate to defend us. The prophet Micah tells us that we are on trial, you and I. God himself has brought the charges and God sounds very put out:

Listen now, listen to God [Micah chapter 6, verse 1, says]:  
"Take your stand in court.  
If you have a complaint, tell the mountains;  
make your case to the hills."

No, this is not good at all. Not only is God bringing charges against us, he has enlisted the mountains and the hills to be our jury. Aren't these the very mountains and hills that God created? Talk about a stacked jury! How could the mountains and hills rule against God, their creator? They are made of the very rocks that Jesus said would cry out in praise to God if we neglect to praise him.<sup>1</sup> The mountains are faithful to God, standing by, and ready to take our place. No doubt God is reminding us that **we** are God's creation, also. We tend to forget what even the mountains and the hills remember: God is our creator. The message gets clearer as it goes on. Listen to verse two:

And now, Mountains, hear God's case;  
listen, Jury Earth—  
For I am bringing charges against my people.  
I am building a case against Israel.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Luke 19:40](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Message

No, this is not good at all. God, our creator and the ruler of all things, is bringing suit against us. **He is holding the bloody glove and we all know that it fits.**

Were you ever called to the principal's office? Called on the carpet at work? There is a time, in between being summoned and arriving when we review all of our actions to see if we can figure out what the charge is going to be. The problem is not that we are clueless about what we might have done wrong, or what we might have left undone, but rather that there are so many possibilities that could have been found out, discovered, busted!

“Dear people, [God says in verse 3,]  
how have I done you wrong?  
Have I burdened you,  
worn you out?”

Notice that God does not give us a list of complaints—at least not here. Earlier, in chapter 3, Micah brings a whole long list of charges that God has against us, and they boil down to this:

We don't write. We don't call. We don't visit.

God wants a close, intimate, and personal relationship with us, and we are too busy. Too busy enjoying all the gifts that God has given to us—our lives, our work, our families and friends, our chores, our hobbies, even our church—too busy except when we need things. And when God provides what we need, then we take the money and run. We take our health and run. We take our jobs and run. **“If the glove don't fit, you must acquit!” But the problem is that the charges fit us all too well.**

What God wants with us is a relationship. We hear that in the next few verses of our Old Testament lesson today, when God enumerates all the things that he has done for us. Perhaps you heard these verses differently than I heard them; let me tell you what I heard:

I delivered you [God says] from having to worship me in a school;  
and I paid a good price to get you this land of your very own.  
I helped you to leap in faith to build this facility, and to dance with joy when each phase was done.  
I inspired those who designed the nave to give you a view each week of some of my best work,  
and I sent you a school to pay the mortgage.  
I sent Jonathan and Wes to lead you—and Barry and John and Joani and Elliot and Jane too!  
Remember when it seemed there wasn't enough money; I sent more your way.  
When the music stopped I sent you new musicians and a new organ.  
Remember when you were in the wilderness,  
and all those years of waiting for a new vision?  
Well, here it is: Sharing God's transforming love with absolutely everybody.  
Listen and I'll tell you how.

And that—I hear God saying—is only what he's done for us lately. What does God want in return? I'm tempted to say that God wants nothing in return because our salvation is totally free. There is nothing that we can do, nothing that we can offer, nothing that we CAN BE TO MERIT an eternal relationship with God. But God gives us life, and life eternal, anyway. **The glove does fit—we are guilty as charged—and yet God acquits us.**

But, if I told you that God wants nothing in return I would be in serious error. God's gifts of life itself and of salvation are **totally** free, but God wants something in return: God wants a continuing relationship with us.

Remember a few years ago when Rick Warren's book, *A Purpose-Driven Life*, was a huge bestseller? Everyone, it seems, wants to know "Why am I here? What is my purpose?" Self-help books suggest that people should look within, at their own desires and dreams, to find their purpose in life. But Father Warren said the starting place must be with God and his eternal purposes for each of our individual lives. True! All discernment needs to start with God. But with all due respect to Pastor Warren, I can tell you why we are each here, each and every one of us, and we are all here for the same purpose. We are here to praise and thank and worship and to be in relationship with God, whether we are an electrician or a doctor or a banker or a teacher or a soldier or a stagehand or a student or something else... **How will the mountains and hills judge us; are we fulfilling our purpose in life?**

The next verses in our Old Testament lesson share a few questions that others have raised about how we are to praise and thank and worship god, and how we are to be in relationship with God. Roughly translated, they say something like this:

Should I triple my pledge? Give an endowment to the church?  
Would God be impressed if I worshiped here every day of the week?  
Should I join the choir AND the Bible study AND Adult Forum AND the altar guild?

Of course the answers to these questions—as any spiritual leader would tell you—is YES! But we do not do these things to be in relationship with God, but because we are in relationship with God. God did not give us Christ Jesus to heal the church; he gave us Christ Jesus and the church to heal the world. Jesus taught and ministered and healed in the world. What Micah is suggesting is for us to examine what lies behind our offerings, what lies behind the image we hold of our own righteousness, what lies behind

our worship. This passage is about the intentions that lie behind our actions—our attitudes—and the reality of who we are when all the images are stripped away, when all our pretensions of righteousness stand in God's holy judgment. It is about what God really wants from us, what it means to be in relationship with God. In verse eight Micah says:

[God] has told you, O mortal, 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?**

**Here it is:** the point of today's Old Testament lesson, the prophet Micah's summary of **all** of scripture. Micah says that what God requires of us to be in relationship with him is to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

First, we are to **DO** justice. Hmmm. Problem! We are so embroiled in politics that somehow the word "justice" is perceived as a political agenda. The perception is that "justice," the very thing that God wants us to DO, has been wrapped around someone else's pet cause. We suspect that God's "justice" may have been misappropriated, put to bad use, dishonored. This is because when we do not agree with the cause around which someone else has draped the justice banner we become suspicious of the very word "justice." And when we reject the cause, we are tempted to reject the need to "do justice." The problem is that when we reject doing justice, we reject God. Let me say that again: When we reject doing justice, we reject God.

So let me be very clear: I am not advocating that you adopt a cause, unless the cause is one that God has called you to. I am not even advocating that you do charity, unless the charity is something that God has laid on your heart. What I AM advocating is that we cannot have a real relationship with God unless we look behind our political agendas and our perceptions to connect with, to see, and to help the real people who are The Other. The Bible talks about "justice" in relation to nine groups of Others: widows, the fatherless, orphans, the poor, the hungry, strangers, those who are needy, the weak, and those who are oppressed.<sup>3</sup> You and God will have to figure out with whom you are called to do justice. I can give you a

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<sup>3</sup> ["What Does the Lord Require of You?"](#) Edward F. Markquart, *Sermons from Seattle*.

hint, though: God puts each and every person with whom we come in contact in our lives for a reason.

There are no random encounters. **How are we doing in God's court case? Have we won an acquittal yet?**

God's second requirement, according to Micah, is to love kindness. notice that we are not to **just** do kindness, but to love kindness. .... I used to have a hard heart, but I just LOVED it when people were kind to me. .... Yes, I greatly appreciated the kindness of others. .... I just loved their kindness. .... This is not the way that God wants us to love kindness. He wants us to **be** kind and to love doing it. He wants us to love The Other when we put God's kindness into action by doing justice. A person who loves kindness does not care one little bit whether someone is taking advantage of his kindness. A person who loves kindness puts kindness into action because she loves God and loves kindness, not because she expects her kind act to produce results. Results are God's department. **Do you love kindness while doing justice; how do you plead?**

God's third and final desire for us—to walk humbly with our God—begins with an action. Our walk with God starts with relationship. We spend time with God, we talk to God, we listen to God, we praise God, and we worship God. But our walk with God moves beyond mere actions—as important as walking the God-walk is. Our walk with God has to move into the realm of attitude because we are to walk **HUMBLY**, letting God be God and knowing that we are not God. In a sense doing justice and loving kindness are how we are to walk humbly with our God. Doing justice and loving kindness are how we are to share God's transforming love with absolutely everybody.

We have been in court today, at a trial brought against us by God. We confess that we stand guilty as charged. You know it, I know it, even the mountains and the hills know it. **We are each wearing the bloody glove, but God acquits us anyway.** What does the Lord WANT from us? **A relationship.** And what does a relationship with God entail? **Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God,** sharing God's transforming love with absolutely everyone.