

## Racism/ Injustice Encouragement Pastor Ken Commentary

Micah 6:8

Given that the subject of racism and injustice has now taken over the news headlines, I want to take a break from the Psalms in order to meditate on a text from the Old Testament book of Micah. Before I do that, I want to take you back to 1963.

It was then when Martin Luther King Junior gave his now famous “I Have A Dream” speech during the March on Washington. He called for civil and economic rights and an end to racism in the United States. I want to quote a little of what he said here:

*“Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children. It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro simply needed to blow off steam will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual.”*

Well, it seems that we are in the midst of another rude awakening of the nation. As Christ followers, let’s condemn racism and join hands with anyone who shares that opinion. It is now our turn to take a stand with our brothers and sisters of every race, particularly those in the black community. The tragic injustice displayed when George Floyd was murdered exposes the horrors of racism. As I pointed my judgmental finger at those who stood by and watched as the murder took place, I realize I too have stood by when a man of another color was humiliated. I too am guilty. I confess my sin. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. May the black man’s legitimate discontent about injustice be my discontent with injustice.

I am a follower of Jesus. I need to love what He loves and hate what He hates. Jesus hates racism.

In Micah 6:8, the prophet summarizes God's will for the lives of His people. "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." One commentator points out that doing justice and loving mercy are NOT two different things. The Hebrew word for justice is the Hebrew term 'mishpat' In this text, the emphasis is on the action of justice. The Hebrew word for mercy 'chesedh' puts the emphasis on the attitude or motive behind the action. To walk with God, then, ***we must do justice out of merciful love.***

When we pray, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' we are praying, among many kingdom characteristics, ***that we would do justice out of merciful love.***

The Hebrew word 'mishpat' or justice occurs over two hundred times in the Old Testament. Its most basic meaning is to treat people equitably. So, Leviticus 24: 22 exhorts those of us who fear God as follows: You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the Lord your God. Anyone, regardless of skin color who does the same wrong should be given the same penalty. Anyone who is innocent should be treated like they are innocent.

Rev. Lawrence Aker, III is senior pastor of the Cornerstone Baptist Church in Brooklyn New York. He is black. He writes that *he has learned to live in a system that is not fair. "Whether it's the classic 'first grab' in the elevator, or the look of suspicion in a department store or the guilty-until-proven-innocent opinion many have, I simply live with it. I mean, I live in New York City, I live in Brooklyn, and I have four sets of IDs with me in case I get stopped. I have my license; I have my clergy pass. I have my New York clergy pass, and I have my passport.*

*We learn to live that way because the system isn't balanced.*

After reading this, *I confess I am far too contented with a system that forces people to live that way is another of my many sins. It is an injustice and I do not want to watch it happen anymore.*

One of the classics I read when I was in high school was written by Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird.

At one-point Atticus Finch a lawyer who represented black defendants, was explaining race relations to his daughter in fictional Maycomb County, Alabama.

He says, *"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb in his skin and walk around in it."*

A couple of years ago, Connie and I were in Washington walking from museum to museum. We came to the Black History museum. We approached one of the security guards to see about tickets to get in. "Oh," he said, you need to get those in advance. This place is sold out." He asked us where we were from and what we did for work. He told us that we would not be able to get in and suggested that we come back later. Then he paused and told us to follow him. He was going to get us in. I remember thinking that here was a black man who wanted us to know his story. But it did not work out. Given the amount of time he said it would take to get through the museum, we declined because we did not have that amount of time. I now wonder how many times in the past the opportunity has presented itself for me to hear the story of another and I just blew it off.

This present crisis makes me realize that **I cannot NOT care when I see an injustice**. Let's also condemn anyone who would try to justify the violence and looting going on now. That behavior is intolerable. There is no excuse for that!

In another part of Martin Luther King Junior's Dream Speech, he says:

**"I have a dream** that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. **I have a dream ... I have a dream** that one day in Alabama... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

I share his dream. I invite you to pray with me that the Lord will help me **"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with my God."**