

The prophet Micah's voice speaks as true today as it ever has.

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?

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with God.

That's it. No fine print. No footnotes. No hidden clauses tucked away in the margins of faith. No exemption for busy schedules, complicated lives, personal agendas, or uncertain times.

Micah speaks these words to a people who had forgotten who they were—and, more importantly, whose they were. He reminds them that this is the same God who led them out of slavery in Egypt and into the promise of new life. The God who never forgot a promise, never broke a covenant—even when the people did. Again and again. This God walked patiently with an uncertain people: when faith was strong, when it wavered, and even when it was lost altogether.

God was always there. Always loving. Always present. Always just. Always humble.

And God asked for so little in return: faith that shows itself in love.

That journey took the people through exile and empire, through failure and hope, and eventually—to a lonely manger. There, God once again renewed the covenant, not just with one people, but with the whole world. God entered quietly, vulnerably, and humbly as a child. Not to conquer or dominate, but to accompany and dwell with.

Over the last weeks we've been moving forward from that moment. And if I'm honest, humility reminds me that we don't always see—or hear—how God is calling us into the world. Sometimes we don't have the patience to wait for God to reveal what we need to see. We like answers quickly. We like plans neatly laid out. But faith rarely works that way, but then life rarely does too. In the Holy Land churches lie in rubble. Poverty strikes even the most hard working family. Fear and division is sewn where people ought to see themselves as one. And even in these circumstances we try to steer ourselves away, but God calls us back to trust.

Handing over the wheel is hard. Trust always is. It takes disciple-level trust to place ourselves fully in God's hands—especially when the road ahead is unfamiliar, when the needs of the world feel overwhelming, or when we wonder whether what we offer could possibly be enough.

But perhaps now, with renewed awareness, we can kneel again at Jesus' feet—ready to receive teaching, blessing, and direction.

Today Jesus makes his full entry. Setting aside expectations of power or prestige, he sits on a mountain to teach—echoing Moses, who once climbed the holy mountain to receive the law. But Jesus does not come with thunder or trembling ground. He comes with gentleness. With blessing. With words that sound less like commands and more like invitations.

The Beatitudes are not a replacement of the law, but its fulfillment. God's justice wrapped in mercy. God's love aimed directly at the vulnerable—those nearby and those far away. Those whose names we know, and those we will likely never meet, yet who are no less beloved by God. Those who the world says no to, but God says, "you are mine."

And this is where Global Mission fits so naturally into our faith. Because God's vision has always been bigger than borders. God's justice has always extended beyond what we can see or even imagine. God's love has never been confined to one place, one language, or one people.

And let's be honest: have you ever heard a sermon on the Beatitudes that leaves you feeling... a little crushed?

So often we hear these words and immediately measure how far short we fall. We talk about the impossibly high bar Jesus sets, and how we just can't seem to clear it. It can feel humbling—and sometimes disheartening. Or we look at the mess in this world and think to ourselves “what can I possibly do?” and immediately feel ashamed?

But humility is not the same as self-condemnation.

The Beatitudes hold both Law *and* Gospel. They call us to live differently—but also remind us that God is already at work through us. To believe we are unworthy of blessing would be to underestimate the power of Christ's gift and the movement of the Holy Spirit among us. And frankly, it would be untrue.

Because while none of us is perfect, this church—*you*—have lived lives that reflect the blessedness Jesus names.

Now today, I don't have a mountain though on a clear day I can see them. And I am definitely not Jesus.

But I do have a pulpit—and a precious and holy opportunity to speak truth in love.

And the truth is this: as we look around, as we reflect honestly, we can see how much God has already done through this community. Could we do more? Of course. The church's work is never finished. And we know we always have opportunities as a local church body and more broadly through the ELCIC Global Mission initiatives. All that we see, every vulnerable person who Jesus proclaims as blessed, is a call to us to serve, but also a reminder to us that God's grace is never exhausted.

And you are proof of that. So today, let me say what Jesus might say if he were standing right here.

Blessed are you, Hope Lutheran Church, for serving this community and this world for over a half century. You have weathered change, challenge, and

uncertainty—not by hiding your faith, but by letting your light shine so that others might glimpse the love of God.

Blessed are you for caring for those in need. You have fed neighbors, welcomed strangers, supported refugees, clothed the vulnerable, and shared what you have—not out of obligation, but out of compassion.

Blessed are you for responding to disaster, whether close to home or across the globe. You don't ask, "Do they deserve it?" You ask, "How can we help?"

Through partnerships like CLWR and the wider ministries of the ELCIC, you have stood shoulder to shoulder with siblings around the world—not as saviors, but as companions.

Blessed are you for living into global mission not as charity, but as relationship. For understanding that God's work is mutual—that we give and receive, teach and learn, serve and are served. That Christ's body stretches across borders, cultures, and languages, and that when one part suffers, all suffer together.

Blessed are you for caring for one another in times of loss. You have carried grief together. You have shared burdens. You have lived as one body, bound together in Christ's love.

Blessed are you for caring for God's creation. You have taken seriously the call to be stewards of the earth, recognizing that justice includes how we treat the world and one another.

Blessed are you for being willing to grow—spiritually, faithfully, courageously. You have allowed yourselves to be stretched, making room for new voices, new questions, and deeper trust.

Blessed are you for choosing love over fear in a divided world. When you didn't understand, you sought understanding. When you were hurt, you pursued reconciliation. You followed the example of Jesus, who broke bread with all.

Blessed are you for showing up—again and again—with your hands, your hearts, and your hope. This church stands because of your faithfulness.

Blessed are you for thinking not only about today's church, but tomorrow's. You have invested in the future so that those who come after you may know the same grace you have received—and may discover new ways to live out Micah's call in a changing world.

And finally, blessed are you, Hope Lutheran Church, simply for being who you are: a community of love, laughter, memory, worship, and deep care.

We are blessed to belong to one another.

We are blessed to walk together.

We are blessed to be part of God's work—here and around the world.

And I am blessed to walk with you.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.