

A Church That Practices Mercy and Justice

Rich Nathan

September 2 and 3, 2012

Vineyard- The Next 25 Years Series

Micah 6.8

INTERACTING WITH THE SERMON

SYNOPSIS OF THE SERMON

Following the 25th Anniversary of Vineyard Columbus, Rich Nathan continued his sermon series this weekend by casting vision for the Christ-centered values that will guide Vineyard Columbus for the next 25 years. This week he preached on the responsibility of the Christian to practice mercy and justice toward the local community and world at large. As followers of Jesus we are instructed "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with [our] God" (Micah 6:8). When we chose to submit ourselves to the authority of Jesus, we were choosing to submit ourselves to His good and righteous instructions. Rich continued his sermon by providing guidance for how we 21st-century Christians of Vineyard Columbus can carry out these values. Rich described mercy as 'compassion in action' and it often presents itself to those who are undeserving of it. Examples of mercy would be to care for the poor, the prisoner, the homeless, the hungry, and the sick (Mt 25:35-36). Acts of mercy are accessible to virtually everyone in the world and no special training is required to feed the hungry or visit the sick. Such acts would be considered normal coming from a mother to her daughter but Jesus teaches us to extend these often mundane acts of mercy to the people outside our families just as He did for us. Furthermore, followers of Jesus are instructed to act justly by dealing with root causes and to advocate for those who are poor, in prison, homeless, hungry and sick. Rich quoted Harvie Conn, "What will the instrument of the church be in affecting...change? Not simply charity, but also justice. Charity is episodic, justice is ongoing. One brings consolation, the other correction. One aims at symptoms, the other at causes. One changes individuals, the other societies." Acts of mercy and justice; however, can result in compassion-fatigue or worse a self-righteous attitude. Therefore, we must guard our hearts and carry out the Lord's instructions by walking humbly next to Him.

In 5 minutes or less, briefly give a synopsis of this week's sermon. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning OR interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.

- What are one or two things from this weekend's sermon that really stood out to you?
- Describe a time in your childhood when you were shown mercy and it meant something to you. Hint: Mercy means unmerited favor and often involves someone being given something they don't deserve.
- What did the act of mercy teach you about the person who acted mercifully toward you?



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Study Goal: This study will look further into the type of life that is pleasing to God and how to best carry out His instructions of “act justly and love mercy and walk humbly.” By the end of this study, your small group will have discussed practical ways to carry out this command in 21st century, Central Ohio.

Context: The Lord's instructions to act in mercy and justice extend way before the commands of Jesus to His disciples. The Old Testament describes the character of God at length and the book of Isaiah provides specific instructions for how God's people should react toward their surrounding community during a volatile time of war and invasion. The prophet Isaiah uses his writing to remind the people who their God is and the quality of His character. He knew from the psalmist's description of the Lord, that He is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Ps 103:8). For the people of God to protect themselves against opposing powers, they must take on this same character by showing justice and mercy in very specific and practical ways.

Read Isaiah 58: 1-12

- 1 “Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.
- 2 For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them.
- 3 ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say,
‘and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?’
“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
- 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
- 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for people to humble themselves?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
day acceptable to the Lord?
- 6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?



- 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
- 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness[a] will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
- 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
- 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
- 11 The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
- 12 Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

- What paradoxical situation is presented vs 1-2
- What questions do the bewildered people of Israel ask in vs 3a?
- What answer does the Lord Give to His people in vs 6-7 and 9-10?
- What do all of the Lords answers have in common with each other?
- How does this passage reflect the character of God?
- What opportunities do we have in the community of Vineyard Columbus to reflect God's character by acting in justice? In mercy?
- If you were to reflect God's mercy more fully, for whom among those you know/those in our community who would you show special care during the next week/season?
- If you were to reflect God's justice more fully, for whom among those you know/those in our community would you want to start dealing with root causes or advocating for this week/season?

Leaders, Please share the list below of mercy/justice opportunities to your small group members.



MINISTRY APPLICATION

Below you'll see some options for ministry time with your group. We always encourage you to reserve time in your group to pray for one another and wait on the Holy Spirit.

- We talked about the character of God being one of mercy and justice. Reflect on how you need the Lord to show you mercy and justice? Some of you may have lost hope that God will show you compassion and have stopped asking Him. Ask someone to pray for you. The Lord wants to renew your strength.
- We talked about showing mercy and justice to those who don't deserve mercy. Ask the Lord to reveal any biases or stigmas you may have in your heart that prevent you from reflecting the character of God and serving in a way that shows mercy/justice to others.
- We talked about specific opportunities for showing mercy and justice in Central Ohio. Did any of these people groups move you with compassion or excite you with the idea of helping them? How may the Lord be calling you to serve consistently in this way? A list of phone numbers for ministries is listed below. Write that number down before you leave and consider calling them this week.

Immigration Counseling Services	614.259.5322
Lay Counseling	614.259.5289
The Ohio Benefit Bank	614.259.5352
Free Medical Clinic	614.259.5512
Career Counseling	614.259.5506
Urban Ministry	614.259.5441
Teach at the Community Center	614.259.5502
Juvenile Prison Ministry	614.578.8371
Adult Male Prison Ministry	740.244.6528
Adult Women Prison Ministry	614.259.5348
Women's Shelter	614.259.5441
Visiting the Elderly	614.259.5403
Special Needs	614.259.5257
Human Trafficking	CAnderson43212@aol.com

