

A PREZ RELEASE

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(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)

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A Hard Day's Night

The juxtaposition of tanks in Ramallah and suicide bombers in Tel Aviv grabs us by the throat and shakes us into the darkside of what this world is and is becoming. The increasingly frequent report of yet one more victim of a priest's abuse causes varying responses of anger, embarrassment and numbness as Christian leaders. But we are not the first people to pass through perilous times; countless generations before us have faced their own political impasses, ethnic bloodbaths and ecclesiastical tragedies. That does not minimize our current tragedies, but it does encourage us to find perspective from those who have passed through dark waters before us.

The prophet Micah is a great example of how the prophets spoke to God's people in perilous times. Injustices, terror, abuses of power were everyday occurrences. In fact, our current circumstances pale in comparison to Micah's day. This prophetic epic places us in the middle of the culture of terror in eighth century BC. In response to the inevitable questions, perspectives, evaluations of root causes and solutions to the dilemma a piercing rhetorical question is asked. What does God require of humanity in the middle of such perilous times? (Micah 6:8)

First **DO JUSTICE**.....Life is not to be lived for personal identity, personal comfort or desire to dominate. While our culture gives lipservice to the concept of justice, doing justice is more than a donation to the Red Cross. A USA Today commentary following the deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa said it this way:.... Diana was glamorous, Mother Teresa austere. Diana validated society's preference for helping out. Mother Teresa, with her lined face and simple robes proposed making a greater sacrifice- showing not what we CAN do but what we are CAPABLE of doing." Doing justice requires the readjustment of our entire lives to meet the basic requirements of God's people in perilous times.

Secondly, in the middle of a world of violence God requires that we **LOVE MERCY**: Not the passing of extra laws, but the restoration of new community and of living in community solidarity.

Dr. Peter Kuzmic, Pentecostal leader from Croatia has said, the task of the church is to wash the face of Jesus.. Dr. Kuzmic grew up in Cold War Eastern Europe. An atheistic version of Marxism, a church shackled by tradition and neutralized by political challenge created a picture of Jesus that was mutant at best. It was covered with the cynicism of philosophical constructs without reference to God and a church whose message and life was a relic of a long forgotten era. As a Christian growing up in that kind of context, Dr. Kuzmic simply suggested that it was the responsibility of the church to speak and act so as to most fairly represent Jesus Christ. We love mercy when we fairly represent Jesus to the world!

The third thing that God requires in responding to the terror of the day is for us to **WALK HUMBLY WITH OUR GOD**. This is the driving force that it takes to foster new community and directs our wills according to God's deeds and commands.

Why did Mother Teresa extend compassion to those on the streets of Calcutta for decades? Because she walked humbly before God!!!

Why did Rosa Parks stay seated on that bus in Montgomery on Dec. 1, 1955? Because her attentive walking with God liberated her to breach the walls of segregation and she walked through the breach to freedom realizing it was God who called her to follow.

The clear words of Micah spoken thousands of years ago are not just a challenge to aspire to, nor a goal to work hard to achieve. Why do we walk humbly? Because we are on the path of victory! *Walking humbly before our God is walking confidently in a world that knows not the transforming power of Jesus Christ. This walk is characterized by humility fostered by the grace of God and demonstrating a deep commitment to representing Jesus fairly*

. We will have to navigate the world where tanks in Ramallah and suicide bombers in Tel Aviv will dominate the news . . .

We will traverse a culture where MTV will try to convince us that JACK ASS is the essence of cool . . .

and We will offer our best attempts at pastoral leadership knowing that those well-intended efforts may be rebuffed by families who suspect we are just another one of those "sick priests".

Remember God requires the same of you as He did of God-followers in Micah's day 2800 years ago

DO JUSTICE

LOVE MERCY

WALK HUMBLY BEFORE YOUR GOD

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