

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture texts: **Micah 6:6-8; Mt. 22:36-40; 23:23; Jas. 1:27.**
- B. Our lesson this morning also deals with answering a question. What does the Lord require? The answer to the above question is given three times, possibly four, in the Bible.
- C. The answer involves relationships. God wants us to improve our relationships we have with one another, with Him, and with ourselves.

I. MICAH 6:6-8.

- A. Read the verses.
With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? 7 Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?
- B. All things are good that God requires of His people.
- C. To do justice:
 - 1. This is the relationship with self.
 - 2. To be honest and not to violate conscience. We can better live with ourselves if we can learn to be righteous.
- D. To love kindness:
 - 1. This is the relationship with others.
 - 2. Learning how to treat others improves our own self image. It also helps in the way people will treat us.
- E. To walk humbly with God:
 - 1. This is the relationship with God.
 - 2. God has always specified how He wants to be worshipped. In each age (Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian) God has told us how to worship Him. Any changes or substitutes are not acceptable.
- F. One way to look at this verse from the OT perspective is that of what Micah has said along with his contemporaries:
 - 1. Amos--said to justice.
 - 2. Hosea--said to do kindness.
 - 3. Isaiah--said to be humble.

II. MATTHEW 22:36-40; 23:23.

- A. Read the verses in chapter 22.
"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."
- B. The question of what is the greatest commandment is answered with the words that have been true for all times.
- C. To love the Lord God with all one's heart, strength, soul, and mind:
 - 1. Obviously, this is one's relationship with God.
 - 2. God is to be served with all that one possesses.
- D. To love your neighbor:
 - 1. This is our relationship with others.

2. God wants us in the "people business."
- E. To love your neighbor as yourself:
 1. This is our relationship to self.
 2. To properly love others we must first learn to love ourselves. Good self-esteem (not pride) or Christ-esteem is needed for a fulfilling life.
- F. Read Mt. 23:23.
"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."
- G. This passage mentions three things that are part of the weightier matters of the law. We need to do these without neglecting the others:
 1. Justice--the relationship with self.
 2. Mercy--the relationship with others.
 3. Faithfulness--the relationship with God.

III. **JAMES 1:27.**

- A. Like the above passages, Jas. 1:27, teaches the same truths about the three relationships.
This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.
- B. Matthew 22:36-40 and James 1:27 are true Xianity in a nutshell.
- C. Pure and undefiled religion before the Father:
 1. This is our relationship with God.
 2. There is only one kind of religion that works.
- D. To visit the orphans and widows in their distress:
 1. This is the relationship with others.
 2. Orphans and widows are in a difficult position at no fault of their own and need special attention and encouragement.
- E. And to keep oneself unspotted from the world:
 1. This is the relationship to self.
 2. The temptation of the world pulls us into sin. Let us always strive to be different.
- F. We must always try to keep our three relationships on the very best of terms.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. To get your relationship with yourself right--you must obey the word of God.
- B. To get your relationships with others right--you must obey the word of God.
- C. To get your relationship with God right--you must obey His word.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.