

Do This
February 1, 2026
Micah 6:1-8 Matthew 5:1-12
Center Harbor Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
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The courtroom drama has been a compelling TV genre for some time. Whether in the vein of “Law and Order” or “Judge Judy,” the rapt audience listens to the accusation and the evidence, imagine themselves as judge, and wait in anticipation of the verdict and sentence. We don’t usually think of the courtroom drama as a scriptural genre, but that is exactly what today’s passage from Micah is. The New Oxford Annotated Bible uses the heading “A divine lawsuit for violation of covenant.” The prophet calls court into session and addresses the mountains and hills and foundations of the earth as witnesses of the covenantal conflict. And then God makes Their case by calling on the people to remember God’s mighty, liberating deeds. Old Testament scholar, Daniel J. Simundson, writes that “‘To remember’ in texts like this means to identify fully with the ancient stories, to know that they are not remote tales from long ago but are living examples of the ongoing presence and power of God in every age.” The argument is foolproof. But the people are indignant and wonder if clearly exaggerated, costly examples of sacrifice will appease God. And the prophet reminds them, because the people have forgotten, that the Eternal One requires us to do good, which is still costly because it requires time, action, and very real resources, not just thoughts and prayers. The good is spelled out as “to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.”

Today we participated in Communion with a liturgy written by Mary Luti from the book, Do This: Communion for Just and Courageous Living. You may be familiar with Mary Luti as a pastor and professor or as a member of the UCC Writers’ Group, especially if you receive the UCC Daily Devotions. I’m going to share a passage from this book where she explains that remembering, as God calls the people to do, as we do when we partake of our holy meal, is not simply reminiscing. She writes, “In the Gospel’s original Greek, the word for remembrance is stronger, edgier, more demanding – *anamnesis* – literally, ‘against amnesia.’ It turns out that remembering Jesus in Communion is oppositional, like standing up to something, like standing against an adversary. Remembering at the table is not reminiscence; it’s resistance. It’s refusing to forget.”

The prophets are constantly reminding the people that following God’s way requires not just worship, fasts, and sacrifices, but it requires action as well. In a time such as this when violence seems to rule the streets and lies crowd the airwaves, when the powerful would threaten us into silence and have us not even believe our own eyes; doing justice feels like a tall order. Where to start? Our hearts are heavy with grief and fear for our neighbors; our spirits are weary of bad news. That is by design. The world’s powers would have us too exhausted and defeated to act; they would have us forget that God’s way is possible. In a time such as this, seeing the world as it is and loudly denouncing it, remembering God’s

vision of justice and loudly proclaiming it, is doing justice. As Mary Luti writes, “Remembering is resistance.” The world’s ways are not God’s ways. The powerful’s narrative of “might makes right” is not Jesus’ story of the poor being the blessed ones.

The Beatitudes, what we heard in the gospel message this morning, is describing the way the world is, not the way the world should be. Jesus draws attention to the inequities that exist and renounces those inequities. Jesus stands with the victims of injustice, to the point where he ends up sharing in the shame and suffering and death that the world imposes on them. Those who the world curses, Jesus blesses: the poor, the hungry, the merciful, the peacemakers; the victims of injustice and those who stand with them.

And that’s what we do when we share this holy meal. We are made one body with Christ, and all those who have died at the hands of tyranny throughout the ages, just like he did. Mary Luti goes on to say, “Whenever we gather for Communion, we’re duty bound to remember in such a way that what was done to Jesus is never done again. To anyone.” Imagining how to do justice in a time such as this can be overwhelming. But it may help to know that simply remembering, refusing to forget, is the first step; telling God’s story of love and justice and denouncing empire’s narrative that might makes right and the marginalized are undeserving of basic human dignity. “No,” we say, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for being “less than,” and blessed are those who are reviled for speaking up for them in Jesus’ name. And when we do this, we do not do it alone. We are part of one body with each other, with all the victims of injustice across space and time, and with Christ. We do this not because we think we’ll be rewarded in the next life, not even because we think we’ll see drastic progress in this lifetime. We might not. And still we do justice in an unjust world, still we love kindness though we face malice, still we walk humbly with our God in response to God’s faithfulness and righteousness. Because God will always keep their age-old covenant and God will not fail to lead God’s people to a world of justice and peace.