

Who's Carrying in the Hood?

A Sermon by Ron Slager

Presented April 4, 2010

at Stockbridge Avenue United Methodist Church

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20100411 *Who's Carrying in the Hood?*

By Pastor Ron Slager

Presented April 11, 2010 at Stockbridge Avenue United Methodist Church

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POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

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Scripture Micah 6:8



The chancel area was roped off with actual yellow police crime scene tape. There is a chalk outline of a person on the floor of the chancel area.

Read Scripture

Micah 6:8

He has shown what is required of you...

... To act justly (do justice), to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your god!

After first reading the Scripture, ask the congregation to reread the Scripture in unison. Then once again!

After Scripture is read a second time in unison, lead into the *Crime Scene* explanation.

Pastor Ron extemporaneously... explains that the chancel area has been identified as a possible "Crime Scene", Yellow Police Line Do Not Cross tape has the entire chancel roped off and above is the chalk lined body image on the floor with arm stretching toward the altar.

The "crime scene" was investigated by the NCIS Team, on loan from the Navy Criminal Investigation Service. Start MCIS Sketch

[20100411 MCIS Sketch Intro to Sermon](#)

Music: "Who are you?"

Ron (on cell phone): ...Director, we certainly appreciate the pro bono weekend availability of the NCIS Squad. It's a great asset.

Can you patch me through to them right now? Thanks, Director.

Ron (staying on cell phone but turning to Video Screen says): Ok team, what have we got here?



DiNozzo (photo appears live voice over):

Well Boss, we definitely have a crime scene here.

**Ron: Tell me something I don't know, DiNozzo.
Any ideas on who this is or how he or she got here?**

DiNozzo: Judging from the location of the body, my best guess would be that this was a Methodist.

Ron: Ya' Think?



Duckie (Photo appears on screen along with DiNozzo, live voice over): I would concur with that observation, Ronald. During the autopsy I discovered a large amount of **green bean casserole** in the stomach. A certain indication that this person was most probably a Methodist or at the very least had recently participated in a Methodist gastronomic event.

DiNozzo: Yah boss, he probably went to a church potluck, came upstairs for the service, fell asleep during the sermon, did a little sleep-walkin' after everyone else had left, tripped on the altar steps and ba-da-boom, ba-da-bing, it's "*While You Were Sleeping*" all over again, except this time he just never woke up.

Ron: Duckie, you got any more to add to this picture?

Duckie: Just that the victim appears to be a relatively healthy male, between 55 and 70 years of age with extremely pale skin. I've ruled out anemia and so my conclusion is that he died of "**Bee in the Bottle Syndrome.**" How he acquired it, I cannot tell. He might have been intentionally infected. It's hard to say. But what I can tell you is, if it is **Bee in the Bottle Syndrome**, it is highly contagious and if this is, in fact **BBS**, we may very well have a full blown epidemic on our hands.

Ron: OK Abs, what you got for me?



Abbey (her photo is added to the screen, live voice over): I've been going over the things collected at the crime scene and none of this evidence fits together. The shoes have no trace of significant wear and yet they are really old, I'd say a 1960's style. On top of that, the shoes have absolutely no, nada, outside dirt or gravel on them. It's like they never were worn outside the doors of the church.

And then we have the fibers in his trousers. They too are of a 1960's vintage, but they do show excessive wear, especially on the seat of the trousers. I don't think this guy has ever been out of the doors of the church.

Ron: Thanks Abbey.

Abbey: Oh, one more thing. He had a faded card clutched in his hand. All that I could make out of the card were the word Micah, and the name John... something.

Ron: Good work Abs. I think we've got some pretty good clues toward figuring out who the victim is, how he ended up here, and how he died.

Ok everybody, keep working on it and if anything comes up... get back to me A-SAP.

I'll work on it from this end.

The local law enforcement officers (LEOs) and my DS have been anxious for some sort of an explanation.

Not to mention my in box is filling up with unanswered emails from the Bishops Office want'n to know just what's going on here.

Ron hangs up... Video goes dark a still photo image of the chalk lined body iris' in slowly.

Ron "investigatively" looks around a little longer... lapse time a minute or so...

While Ron continues "investigating, looking over the crime scene" Tom Hagadone starts singing Something Happening Here (see lyrics at the back/end of sermon manuscript)

Transition to the Message/Sermon body image on screen fades to sermon title slide:

Who's Carrying in the Hood?

Sermon begins...

...Lately there has been a great controversy brewing on talk Radio and TV.

How many of you are familiar with Glenn Beck?

How many of you are fans of Glenn Beck?

When Glenn Beck told listeners of his radio show on March 2 that they should "run as fast as you can" from any church that preached "social or economic justice" because those were code words for Communism and Nazism, he probably thought he was just tweaking a few crunchy religious liberals who didn't listen to the show anyway.

Instead he managed to outrage Christians in most mainline Protestant denominations, African-American congregations, Hispanic churches, Catholics, and yes, folks, Methodists--who first heard the term "social justice" from our founding father, John Wesley, **Not to mention the teaching of a certain fellow from Nazareth who was always blathering on about justice...** Between the teachings of Jesus, the tradition of the Christian Church and the specific teachings of John Wesley, I think it is pretty clear

that we Methodists have a mandate to “run as fast as we can toward social justice” instead of away from it!

So if you subscribe to the same logic as Mr Beck, here ya’ go... and there is the door.

(Hopefully) I see nobody left.

This morning we are looking at a scripture from the Old Testament prophet Micah that states quite clearly God’s mandate for social justice and involvement.

As we go back to our scripture we need to ask the question: What is this scripture all about and what is God trying to tell me through it?

I think this scripture is reminding us that we cannot truly be followers of God if we stay comfortably seated in our pews and do not work toward righting some of the injustice that is rampant in society!

And not only does Micah say it, but Jesus also made it clear that he wants us “in the hood.” – He was in the “hood”.

He had followers and friends that were all outside of the organized religious institutions. And how did he get them?

Not by staying inside the temple all of his life.

Our poor dead fellow here at the altar had not been out of the church in the name of God since 1960!

He didn’t even know what the “Hood” was.

He had an extremely severe case of ***Bee in the Bottle Syndrome***.

You all know what that is, right? No?

So, you may be asking yourself just what is ***Bee in the Bottle Syndrome?***

Well... ..it’s not really a syndrome so much as it is a way of “catching” bees without the bees knowing they are caught. And once the bees are caught in the trap, they don’t know how to get out, even though the way they came in or got in is not blocked.

Now these “Bee in the Bottle” traps are a lot like churches.

They come in all sizes, denominations and “flavors”.

For example...

There are the mainline churches that have been around forever.



(pull out a one liter Coke Classic bottle)

...They all claim to be the “Real Thing”....



(Then take out a slightly smaller Pepsi bottle)

...Others claim to be geared to the “Pepsi Generation”...



(Then take out a bottle with no label)

...then there are the “Non Denominational” bee traps...



(Then take out a “bottled water” bottle)

...there are still others that take whatever it is that they profess and water it down so it’s lack of any definitive flavor can appeal to “more” by not offending anyone’s taste.



(Then take out a Coke Zero bottle)

...then there is the bee trap for the “Next” generation.



(Then take out a LARGE TWO LITER BOTTLE of Dr Pepper)

...Well, then there are the Mega Churches, the mega bee traps, which promote their ability to catch bees because of their...

... **“Authentic Blend of 23 Flavors”** offering a taste of this or that in hope that one of those flavors will be just the right thing to hit a rogue bee’s hot button and be “just the ticket” to get them into the trap.

Just ReThink about it! Isn’t this really the way we approach “doing church”?

We spend all our energy trying to make not a better mouse trap but a better “bee trap”.

You see these bee traps we call churches all offer a lure... ...some kind of bait!

The lure...

Personal Holiness.

Hanging out with like minded people.

Each bottle is a microcosm...

...it's own little world.

The bee in the bottle is content...

People are busy feeling good, being good "Do Bees"

They think they are socially conscious as they assemble flood buckets, collect underwear, have a community meal once a year.

They DO FOR...

...NOT WITH the community.

They DO what THEY THINK people need...

And it is no surprise community people instinctively will take what ever the "Do Bees" give them.

And the "Do Bee" giver feels good, ...but sadly nothing changes.

Tomorrow that hungry person they fed yesterday will be hungry again.

Good "Do Bees" in a bottle...

... just buzzing around and around and around.

Busy "Do Bees" intoxicated by the elixir or nectar in the bottle, oblivious to world outside their little bottle.

Now a BEEHIVE is also a flurry of activity.

The difference is that the bees from a hive go out...

...into the world and make a difference.

In fact they do so much good, they don't even know what all they do.

However, those impacted by the bee's interaction in their society know when the bees have gone away.

Are we bees in a bottle?

Are we in a bee trap?

Or are we called to be something else?

I think we are called to be more than bees in a bottle.

We are called to be bees from a hive!

We are called to be bees out in the world dedicating our lives to making the world a better place.

God calls us to be bees in the world.

Going back to the scripture, let's get specific.

What does the Lord require of thee, **do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.**

And that means?

1) To Do Justice

Regardless of what Glenn Beck says, God is calling us **TO DO JUSTICE**; social justice and **LOVE MERCY**; social mercy!

But, frankly, it is a lot **easier** for Christians to **LOVE justice** and **DO mercy**

We Christians are pretty good at doing acts of mercy.

We are great at being **first responders: those who set up soup kitchens, assist victims of natural disasters, and help people find jobs, clothing, housing, etc.**

This is not to negate these actions.

They are very important and churches and Christians need to be first responders.

But that is not where it should stop.

While these acts of mercy are important and necessary, they are merely TRIAGE, or a band-aid approach to a more serious underlying unhealthy societal condition.

God doesn't require us to do mercy...

...but rather, God requires us first and foremost, to DO Justice.

“Doing” economic and social justice means proactively advocating TO CHANGE THE CONDITIONS that cause people to be poor or unemployed or under educated or malnourished or left without affordable healthcare.

True social justice is not the emergency room,
True social justice is not the operating room... ...or even the hospital.

True Societal Justice is likened to creating a **Wellness Center...**

A wellness center that is addressing the sources or causes of an unhealthy social condition and setting a new course of action that will relieve or correct the root cause of the negative condition in the future.

That’s what the gospel is all about... ...New Directions ,...and CHANGE!

Changing YOUR “HOOD”,so there would be no reason for anyone to ‘carry’ anything but love in YOUR HOOD.

What would happen if we saw the gospel **as all it was meant to be?**

What if it were allowed to **explode out** of its restraining capsule and become the **Good News** for all of life, for all areas of human activity, for all people?

That would truly be **excellent news!**

It would be **wonderful news** about reconciliation with God, other human beings and all of creation.

It would be **amazing news** for our families, homes, lifestyles, spending habits and relationships.

It would be **tremendous news** for our neighborhoods, cities, farms and slums.

It would be **revolutionary news** for our nation’s policies on education, healthcare, immigration, security and wealth distribution.

It would include **alternative news** for our international political and economic structures, for our world order.

It would be **redeeming news** for our ecosystems—forests, mountains, rivers, plants, animals, seas, lakes and air.

It means changing the status quo.

Perhaps it would finally mean "... **...and justice for all.**"

2) We are required to Love Mercy.

God is calling us to love mercy.

Just as it is easier to **love** justice than to do it, it is easier to **be merciful** than to **LOVE MERCY**.

We like to do the things that we perceive are helpful to others!

That is 'doing mercy.'

So, what might it look like to love mercy?

Why would I love mercy? **How** would I love mercy?

If I have experienced mercy, I will love mercy.

If I want others to know about God and receive His mercy, ...I will love mercy.

If I want to be shown mercy, ...I will love mercy.

If I accept God's mercy and give myself to Him, ...I will love mercy.

If I understand mercy, ...I will love mercy.

If I understand worship, ...I will not only love mercy, I will do mercy.

Bottom line, I will love mercy if I have experienced and am willing to extend it to others.

3) Walk Humbly with Your God! The verse asks what God requires of us?

The word for require means 'seek with care'.

So you could say this...'**what does God carefully look for in us?**'

As I've looked at this phrase, a sharper meaning has come into focus.

The famous phrase 'walk humbly with your God' simply means (in the Hebrew) to 'allow yourself to be advised' by God.

Or put another way, 'pay attention to what God is saying and doing'.

It means 'keep your eyes on God ...while you live'.

Let the eyes of **your heart and your spiritual ears** be sensitive to anything God says or does while you are living your life and then act on what you hear.

John Wesley knew the necessity of walking humbly with your God.

From the very beginning of his spiritual transformation he recognized that personal “holiness” could only be obtained by working toward societal wholeness.

For Wesley there was no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness.

*The communal forms of faith in the Wesleyan tradition not only promote personal growth, **they also equip and mobilize us for mission and service to the world.***

Wesleyan theology stresses that a decisive change in the human heart can and does occur under the prompting of grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

... we are made new creatures in Christ.

...Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love for our neighbor.

No motif in the Wesleyan tradition has been more constant than the link between Christian doctrine and Christian living.

Methodists have always been strictly enjoined to maintain the unity of faith and good works through the means of grace, as seen in John Wesley's, *Nature, Design ...et al (NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES, IN LONDON, BRISTOL, KINGSWOOD, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, ETC).*

The coherence of faith with ministries of love forms the discipline of Wesleyan spirituality and Christian discipleship.

This is expressed in Wesley's famous proclamation: “Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.”

John Wesley

Now that would really be something worthwhile to carry in the hood.

Who's Carrying in the Hood?

You can carry in the hood.

In fact **you are called to carry in this hood** and other hoods. Amen

Continue with the Invitation...

If you want to carry in the Hood, you are invited to come forward to receive your carry permit as a special agent of the M C I S.

Invite the congregation to come forward and become a card carrying "Special Agent" of the United Methodist Church, a member of **MCIS** **M**ethodist **C**hristians **I**n **S**ervice.

During the "call to service" Tom Hagadone sings **Get Together** (see lyrics)

*"What the Lord requires of you, is to do justice,
and to love kindness, and to walk humbly
with your God?" Micah 6:8*

*"Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds
is all alone and dead!" James 2:17*

*"Do all the good you can, By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can, In all the places you can,
At all the times you can, To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can." John Wesley*

(back of card)

Special Agent

M★**C**★**I**★**S**

Methodist **C**hristians **I**n **S**ervice

(front of card)

Following the "call to service"

Benediction

And congregational singing of **They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love**



Lyrics of:

Something Happening Here (circa 1968)

There's something happening here
What it is ain't exactly clear
There's a man with a gun over there
Telling me I got to beware

I think it's time we stop, children, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

There's battle lines being drawn
Nobody's right if everybody's wrong
Young people speaking their minds
Getting so much resistance from behind

I think it's time we stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

What a field-day for the heat
A thousand people in the street
Singing songs and carrying signs
Mostly say, hooray for our side

It's time we stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

Paranoia strikes deep
Into your life it will creep
It starts when you're always afraid
You step out of line, the man come and take you away

We better stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down
Stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down
Stop, now, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down
Stop, children, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down

Lyrics of:

Get Together (circa 1967)

Love is but the song we sing,
And fear's the way we die
You can make the mountains ring
Or make the angels cry
Know the dove is on the wing
And you need not know why
C'mon people now,
Smile on your brother
Ev'rybody get together
Try and love one another right now
Some will come and some will go
We shall surely pass
When the one that left us here
Returns for us at last
We are but a moments sunlight
Fading in the grass
C'mon people now,
Smile on your brother
Ev'rybody get together
Try and love one another right now
If you hear the song I sing,
You must understand
You hold the key to love and fear
All in your trembling hand
Just one key unlocks them both
It's there at your command
C'mon people now,
Smile on your brother
Ev'rybody get together
Try and love one another right now
Right now
Right now!
