

Immerse Day 71 :: May 10

“And now, oh Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you?” As I read this, my mind immediately drifted to Micah 6:8, “He has shown you, mortal, what is good and what the Lord requires of you; to live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.” This is a favorite preaching series, or bible study topic, and has been for years. It is short, simple, and easy to preach. I myself have preached this sermon series and it is an important one. What does it mean to live justly? What does it mean to love mercy? And how in the world are we to walk humbly with God?

Today’s list is a bit harder, a bit more comprehensive, and frankly harder to preach. What does God require of us? “Only” that we fear (read “respect”) Him, live lives pleasing to Him, love Him, serve Him with all our heart and soul, obey His every command, and remember that this is for our good, not His. I have yet to hear this passage put to words.

This is a tall order. “Fear Him” isn’t so bad. Especially when we recall that this “fear” isn’t *phobia* fear; we are not to be afraid of God like the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai who wouldn’t approach for fear of death. This “fear” is *awe* fear. To stand at the foot of a mountain we need to climb, or a canyon precipice we need to descend, or to see the power of the sun in all its brilliance. We can have fear like that for God. So, good. “Fear Him,” check.

“Live lives pleasing to Him,” is a little harder. How can we know what is pleasing to Him? Through His word of course, and wise mentors and teachers, and meditation on His character. This all takes work, intentionality, and community. But when we fail, which we all will time and time again, there is forgiveness which allows us to try again (quick note: forgiveness doesn’t allow us to not try at all, simply to try again).

“Love and serve Him with all our heart and soul,” is getting even harder. My heart and soul tend to be split a million different ways. To focus the devotion of my heart on God alone, and not on the chocolate brownie on the counter, or the opinion of others, or the group with which I’ve aligned myself, or my own desire for fame, or power, is harder yet. It takes regular, daily devotion to God to keep myself focused solely on His will and His plan every minute of every day.

“Obey His every command,” is truly impossible. God knew it, so He gave us the sacrificial system to atone for our failures. Intentionally or unintentionally, we will all fail God, and so there are sacrifices for every conceivable way of breaking God’s law.

And then came Jesus. Jesus’ transfiguration and resurrection taught us a healthy, fearful respect. Our relationship with Him gives us the desire to live lives pleasing to Him. His humanity helps us to love Him, and His divinity helps us to serve Him with all we are. And by simplifying the law, “fulfilling it” as He put it, He has made it much more realistic to try to obey Jesus’ commands. And His death on the cross, as a substitute, a sacrifice for us, frees us from the terror of God’s wrath and punishment when we fail.

One final note. “Remember that this is all for your good,” becomes much easier when it is Jesus, our friend and rabbi, we are following. He showed us what it means that His way, His model, is the best one for us and for us all.