

## THE MESSAGE

November 14, 2010

Micah 6:8

*Love Kindness*

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Let's have a little fun here this morning. Check out these corporate logos. Can you tell me – what organization these symbols represent? (*Show examples and let the congregation guess.*)



Very good! Almost anywhere in the world these symbols are recognized and connected to their product or to their organization.

So, what's our "corporate logo" as the Christian Church? What identifies us as followers of Jesus around the world? Some might say it's the cross, and yet, there are many rock stars and even gang members who wear a cross and they aren't Christian. Wearing a cross no longer identifies someone as a Christian or a disciple of Jesus.

Others might say our logo is a fish, but have you seen the way some people drive with a fish symbol on their cars and tend to wave with just one-finger hand gestures? No thank you!

I'd like to suggest a different corporate identity as followers of Jesus, it's found in the Hebrew word, *hesed*. This word is pronounced as if you have something stuck in your throat. It's kind of fun to say... *Hesed*. Give it a try. Nice! Now you can impress all your friends that you are a Hebrew scholar.

Of course, the word *hesed* is easier to say than it is to define. Some Bibles translate it as mercy, or kindness, or faithfulness, or love, or grace. It all depends on the situation.

Dr. Katharine Shakenfeld at Princeton Theological Seminary says that, there are four characteristics associated with *hesed*.

First, it's used when help is essential; the person in need cannot help himself or herself.

Second, it's used when help is desperately needed; without that help, the person's situation will go from bad to worse.

Third, it's used when a person is able to provide the help that is needed; and no other alternatives exist for the person in need.

Fourth, the person in need has no control over the decision of the person who's offering the help. And there are no negative implications if the one who can help chooses not to help. It's a free choice: whether to help or not. There is nothing in it for the one giving the help. But it makes a world of difference to the one receiving the help...

No matter what English word we use to try to describe *hesed*, nothing quite captures the fullness of its meaning. Consider these people...

- *Hesed* is a guy, named Bill, who gave a kidney to a friend who was dying of kidney failure.
- *Hesed* is the firefighter who rushes into a burning building to save a trapped child.
- *Hesed* is the 9-year-old who gave all of her birthday money to buy meals through the Feed My Starving Children ministry.
- *Hesed* is the teen who gives up a few hours each week to visit lonely shut-ins at a local nursing home.
- *Hesed* is Jesus, the Son of God, who became human and died on a cross for the redemption and restoration of the entire world. Who overcame sin and death and the devil for all of us.

None of these people were forced or coerced or asked or guilted into doing what they did. They just did it. They were living by the Niki catch phrase – *Just do it!*

*Hesed* would make a great corporate logo for us, as disciples of Jesus. When the world sees us living-out *hesed*, they see God at work in our lives. They see God's love at work in the world through us.

I want to live out God's will for my life, don't you? I want to live what we pray when we say God, "thy will be done." I assume you want to too or you wouldn't be here this morning for worship.

We continue our study of the verse from Micah 6:8. *He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.*

Last week we learned that part of God's will is that we "do justice," a justice of restoration, not retribution. This week we are NOT told to "be kind." We're told to love kindness. I find that very strange. It's God's will that we love kindness, that we love *hesed*. I wonder why? Why is God so interested in us loving kindness?

I Googled the phrase "loving kindness" and I got over 27,000 hits on my computer. There is a lot of loving kindness going on in the world. One webpage offered this definition...

*To love kindness means you greatly appreciate someone's actions in helping others. You do not need to love the person to actually love their actions. Whenever you see an act of kindness, it makes you feel warm inside, almost as if the person was performing that act of kindness towards you. However, the act of kindness does not necessarily need to be for you. Instead, it can be for anyone, and you just love seeing it done, possibly because this person is helping someone else, showing kindness to someone else, when nobody else would.*

([http://www.ehow.com/way\\_5421002\\_mean-love-kindness.html#ixzz15ALQ9QYm](http://www.ehow.com/way_5421002_mean-love-kindness.html#ixzz15ALQ9QYm))

So why is God so interested in us loving kindness? Because loving kindness and doing justice go hand-in-hand. When we love kindness we see to it that justice happens. When we love kindness we strive for the justice of restoration – not retribution.

I'm convinced that God is more interested in *why* we do things than *what* we do. God is more concerned about our *motives* than God is about our *moves*. If our motives are pure then our moves will be too. See how that works?

Consider this – why are you here this morning? What is motivating you to be here in worship this morning?

If it involves anything other than connecting with God in a powerful and life-giving way to give God all the glory and praise then I invite you to check your motives here this morning. God desires that we come to worship motivated by love and gratitude for who God is and what God is doing in our lives. The Bible teaches us that genuine worship is a worship that comes from the heart – motivated by a loving kindness – NOT motivated by guilt or fear. I invite you to check out Isaiah 29, which talks about worship with a loving kindness.

That's why it's so important that we be reminded from time to time that... *God is good, all the time. And all the time, God is good.*

Because God is good all the time and all the time God is good -- I believe God wants us to do good things, God wants us to do kind things, to do *hesed*, NOT because we have to but because we want to...

Did you know that you don't have to do anything? You don't have to come to worship, you don't have to give 10% as a guide for your financial gifts to the church, you don't have to get involved in the life of this congregation, you don't have to grow in the faith. You don't have to do any of those things.

That's because it's not about *have to's*... it's about *want to's*...

We want to come to worship, we want to give our financial offerings using 10% as the guide, we want to get involved to make this congregation and make it the best that it can be, we want to grow in the faith and share it with others. We want to do our part faithfully.

We do what we do in this place as disciples of Jesus because we are motivated by God's mercy, kindness, faithfulness, love, and grace. We are to be motivated by God's *hesed* in our lives.

Motivated by God's *hesed* – we can truly love one another. We can look past each others faults and failings in order for God's will to change us and our relationships for good. God's *hesed* is right here right now in this place for you.

What motivates you? What are you passionate about? What is the logo you live by as a disciple of Jesus? I hope and pray it has everything to do with God's will for your life, including: *Doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God...*

Next week we'll talk about walking humbly with God – until then may we do so faithfully everyday for the rest of our lives – loving *hesed*! Amen.