

CALLED ON THE COSMIC CARPET

(Micah 6: 1-8)

Intro: Who likes to be called on the carpet?

- Not the red carpet.
 - #Filled with glamorous people.
 - *Beautiful.
 - *Handsome.
 - #Vying for face time.
 - *In front of the cameras.
 - #On their way to an awards show.
 - *Oscars.
 - *Emmys.
 - *Golden Globes.
- But that other kind of carpet.
 - #Scolded.
 - #Reprimanded.
 - #Chewed out.
 - #In the dog house.
 - *Carpet.

Who would like to be called on the carpet in front of someone else?

- It's bad enough to be corrected in private.
 - #Strategy that Jesus recommends.
 - *Matthew 18: 15-18.
- But who likes to get hung out to dry in public?
 - #Your dirty laundry for other folks to see.

Who would like to be called on the cosmic carpet?

- Your most intimate secrets.
- Your most embarrassing mistakes.
 - #For all the world to see.

I. God Called Israel Onto The Cosmic Carpet.

A. How Embarrassing!

1. Not only on the world's stage.
 - a. Accused.
 - b. Indicted.
 - c. Arraigned.
 - d. Put on trial.

2. But with God's creation in the jury box.
 - a. Mountains.
 - b. Hills.
 - c. Foundations of the earth.
3. When God brings suit against God's people.
 - a. Who else is qualified?
 - To hear the case.
 - To sit in judgment.
 - b. Where else is God going to find a suitable venue?

B. It Wasn't Pretty And It Wasn't Pleasant.

1. God complains:
 - a. "O my people, what have I done to you?"
 - b. "In what have I wearied you? Answer me!
-Micah 6:3.
2. Do those words sound familiar?
 - a. If you have been to a Good Friday service.
 - Here at Ascension.
 - In recent years.
 - b. One of the pieces of the Good Friday liturgy.
 - Solemn Reproaches.
 - #10 of them.
 - #Each one of them beginning:
 - *"O my people, O my church,"
 - *"What more could I have done for you?"
 - *"Answer me."
 - #Each one of them containing an indictment against us.
 - #Each one concluding with the ultimate charge:
 - *"But you have prepared a cross for your Savior."
 - Solemn Reproaches are modeled on:
 - #Micah 6:3.
 - *God's complaint against God's people.
 - *God's way of saying:
 - + "What did I ever do to you?"
 - + "That you have treated me in such a way."

C. What Had Israel Done That Was So Bad?

1. No petty offenses, theirs.
 - a. Drag racing with their donkeys.
 - b. Failing to clean up after their camels.
2. They had forgotten.
 - a. Who they were.
 - b. Whose they were.

3. They had forgotten.
 - a. God had redeemed them.
 - Sent them:
 - #Moses.
 - #Aaron.
 - #Miriam (gender equality).
 - To liberate them.
 - #After 450 years of slavery.
 - *In Egypt.
 - b. God had blessed them.
 - That's the Balak/Balaam reference.
 - #Micah 6:5.
 - Balak:
 - #King of Moab.
 - *One of Israel's neighbors.
 - #Wanted Balaam to curse the people of Israel.
 - Balaam.
 - #Blessed them instead.
 - #Needed a little help from his donkey.
 - *One of only two talking animals in the Bible.
 - +Serpent in the Garden of Eden is the other.
 - =Genesis 3:1-7.
 - *Balaam's donkey:
 - +Saw.
 - +Knew.
 - =What Balaam needed to:
 - See.
 - Know.
 - #God wanted Balaam was to bless Israel.
 - *Numbers 22-24.
 - c. God had blessed them with the Promised Land of Canaan.
 - That's the Shittim/Gilgal reference.
 - #Micah 6:5.
 - Shittim.
 - #East bank of the Jordan River.
 - *Outside the Promised Land.
 - Gilgal.
 - #West bank of the Jordan River.
 - *Inside the Promised Land.
 - d. God had blessed them with God's saving acts.
 - They had forgotten all of it.

4. They had all forgotten.
 - a. Rulers.
 - b. Prophets.
 - c. Priests.
 - Micah 3:1-12.
 5. Until Micah reminded them.
- D. Then Israel Wanted To Plea Bargain.
1. They wanted:
 - a. To make amends.
 - b. To make a deal.
 2. What would be acceptable to God?
 - a. Burnt offerings?
 - That's a real sacrifice.
 - Everything is consumed.
 - #No parts can be salvaged for personal use.
 - b. Calves a year old?
 - Those were valuable.
 - When we lived in Iowa.
 - #One of the congregations my dad served.
 - *Rural parish.
 - +Outside of Boone.
 - *Church owned several acres.
 - +Church.
 - +School.
 - =On top of the hill.
 - +At the bottom of the hill near the road.
 - =Parsonage.
 - =Hen house.
 - We always had chickens.
 - =Hog house.
 - I think we only had pigs one time.
 - #They were more trouble than they were worth.
 - =Barn.
 - +Pasture in between.
 - #Every year my dad:
 - *Bought two calves.
 - *Fed them for a year.
 - *Butchered one.
 - *Sold the other.
 - +Profit from the sale paid for:
 - =Feed.
 - =Butchering.
 - =Meat locker/freezer.
 - =Two new calves.

- Year-old calf was valuable.
 - #Especially among people.
 - *Who might be able to afford to eat meat.
 - +Maybe only once a month.
 - c. Thousand rams.
 - Only the richest of the rich would own a thousand rams.
 - Job was the richest man in all of the East.
 - #He owned 7,000 sheep.
 - *Job 1:3.
 - d. Ten thousand rivers of oil.
 - Hyperbole to the nth degree.
 - There were no rivers of oil.
 - #Olive oil. #Not petroleum.
 - e. Firstborn child.
 - Forbidden sacrifice.
 - #Practiced among some of Israel's neighbors.
 - #But *verboten* among the Israelites.
3. God didn't want any of it.
- a. Going through the motions of religious ritual.
 - Made absolutely no difference to God.
 - b. If the people of God didn't remember.
 - Who they were.
 - Whose they were.
 - #Act like that made a difference every day.
 - *Doing justice.
 - *Loving kindness.
 - *Walking humbly with their God.

II. What Do We Do When God Calls Us On The Carpet?

A. That Is Precisely What God's Word Of Law Does.

1. Calls us on the carpet.
2. Points the finger at us.
3. Summons us to court.
4. Those Solemn Reproaches:
 - a. Accuse us.
 - b. Indict us.
 - c. Arraign us.
 - d. Convict us.
 - “O my people, O my church,”
 - “What have I done to you?”
 - “How have I offended you?”
 - “Answer me!”

B. What Answer Can We Give?

1. When we act like we have forgotten:
 - a. God has redeemed us.
 - Through the cross of Christ.
 - b. God has blessed us.
 - In the waters of Holy Baptism.
 - In the bread and wine of the Holy Supper
 - c. God has offered us a place in an eternal Promised Land.
 - Through the gift of faith.
2. When our offerings:
 - a. Time.
 - b. Talent.
 - c. Treasure.
 - Don't impress God in the least.
3. When our efforts:
 - a. To do justice.
 - Too often focus on retributive justice.
 - #Punishment.
 - Too often ignore restorative justice.
 - #Forgiveness.
 - #Reconciliation.
 - b. To love kindness.
 - Eager to claim:
 - #Mercy.
 - #Amazing grace.
 - *For ourselves.
 - Not always so eager.
 - #To offer them to another.
 - c. To walk humbly with our God.
 - When our walk may be neither:
 - #Humble.
 - #With God.
4. If we think we've got these things nailed.
 - a. God nails us.
 - With an accusing finger.
 - With a legal indictment.
 - With those Solemn Reproaches.
 - b. God nails Jesus.
 - Nails Jesus to the cross.
 - #Not for his sin.
 - #But for ours.
 - Calls Jesus on the carpet.
 - #Not for his iniquities.
 - #But for those of the whole world.

- c. Solemn Reproaches.
 - Conclude our Good Friday liturgy.
 - #Except for one thing.
 - *Bringing our sins.
 - +Symbolized by a little black piece of paper.
 - *Bringing them to the cross.
 - +Attaching them to the nails.
 - Where else can we go with our sin?
 - What else can we do?

C. Cross Of Christ Gives An Answer Which We Cannot Give.

1. That cross.

- a. Foolishness in the eyes of the world.
 - Symbol of:
 - #Weakness.
 - #Rejection.
 - #Suffering.
 - 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31.
- b. Wisdom of God.
 - Love.
 - Forgive.
 - Redeem.
 - Bless.
 - #World.

2. That cross.

- a. Which called Jesus on the carpet.
 - To answer for the sins of:
 - #Israel.
 - #You.
 - #Me.
 - #Whole world.
 - b. Followed by a resurrection.
 - Calls us onto the red carpet.
 - #Walking with God.
 - *Through whom we can:
 - +Do justice.
 - +Love kindness.
 - Calls us onto the red carpet.
 - #Walking with God.
 - *As those who have been blessed.
 - *As those who can be a blessing.
 - +To those the world does not often bless.
- =Matthew 5: 1-12.

Concl: Red carpet has been:
-Stained by the cross of Christ.
-Washed by the blood of Jesus.

May we all be called on the carpet.