



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula  
3 Stanmore Bay Road,  
Whangaparaoa, Auckland, N.Z.  
[www.ststephenswgp.org.nz](http://www.ststephenswgp.org.nz)

## Sermon Notes

### ***Aspects of Love***

**Micah 6:1-8**

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When I first became a Christian, there was one question that I wanted to know above all others: What kind of person is God? What is He like? In this chapter from Micah we get some incredible answers.

The most well-known answer is that God is love. We all know that. The OT Prophets and the Psalms repeat that God is slow to anger and of great mercy. This is demonstrated for us again in Micah 6 in a unique and surprising way: God places Himself on trial!

What an amazing thing that the Creator of everything, the one who has given us everything including life itself, humbles Himself before a rebellious and disobedient People and says, "In what have I wearied you?" And answers His own question by rehearsing the things He had done to rescue Israel, "that you may know the saving acts of the Lord".

So, in addition to the love of God we now see the humility of God.

This should not surprise us. We worship the God who came as a helpless babe; we worship a God who allowed the full judgement that should have fallen on us to instead be placed on Him on the Cross; we worship a God who modelled for us the way we should live in the world by dying for it.

Yet these truths have their dangers as well as their comforts.

Love and humility can so often be seen as weak and people are surprised to learn of God's acts of judgement on His people. I once heard a speaker say that God was simply out of control in the Old Testament. God's anger and wrath are not popular themes in today's world. Yet this is foolish thinking. If you love someone and they are treated unjustly you will react with anger. Even if you are treated in an unfair way you will react similarly.

So, the wrath of God is simply another aspect of His love. God knows what will hurt us and what will help us. He knows what is for our good and what if left untouched will fester into an attitude and action that will hurt us and others.

When He finds it necessary to discipline us it will never be pleasant. The People of Israel found the Exile a very hard thing to take. "Were we really that bad? We thought we were ok and that you would love us regardless. Did we not have the Temple as a sign of your presence with us?"

The commentaries I have read tell me that the Prophets are full of questions like that.

When hard things happen to us there will be times when we will not understand. And I don't mean that these things are sent from God. Things happen. How we respond to them is the important thing. Will we ask the Lord to show us what we must learn from this? Those of us called to watch friends and loved one's go through hard times must be careful to walk between the poles of Love that has been turned into sentimentality and Judgement that speaks too harshly. Speaking the truth in love is never easy but that is the high calling that we are to reach for.

So, to the Love of God and the humility of God we must add the wrath of God. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12: 29)

This aspect of God's character has great dangers in it too. The danger comes to us in this question, "How do you behave when you are right towards those who think you are wrong?"

For to be misunderstood or disagreed with is not an easy thing to take. Often, we will get angry and because we are right will speak out of the anger. James tells us in his little letter, "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness." (James 1: 19-20)

So, how do we handle our anger? First let's try to understand it. One psychologist I read a long time ago defined anger as, "A realistic response to a specific injustice." And I want add to that, "real or imagined".

The first question we need to ask of ourselves then is, "What is unfair in what has been said or done?"

Secondly, "Have I understood what is being said or done correctly?" Remember James, "Let everyone be quick to listen..." Time and time again you will find that you have misunderstood what is being said. Ask, "Did I understand you correctly? I thought I heard you say..... Was I right?"

Third, be very careful of thinking you know the MOTIVES of the other person. Even if you think, "You are saying that because you..." You may be wrong. Mostly you will be.

Finally, when you are right, remember to treat the other person with respect. Would you like to be treated in that way? Why then treat others like that? We are called, are we not, to "love our neighbours as ourselves"; "To do to others what we would have done to us"?

Each aspect of the character of God has some dangers in it for those who bear His image and yet are deeply mired in the sin of the world, the sin of their family and their own sin. Love becomes sentiment, humility becomes self-effacement and anger a weapon for imposing my ideas or attitudes on others.

But when those attributes are in the character of the God with whom we have to do we will marvel at His passion for us, be awestruck by His humility and gratefully accept His discipline because we know we are being treated as sons and daughters of the King of kings.