

Sermon fragment, Opawa Baptist, October 2007. Written notes to accompany verbal sermon.  
*Reading Micah 6:8*: What is God seeking from you? Nothing. Nothing but to do justice, to love devotion, and to walk humbly with your God.

And while Micah is perhaps challenging us a little, I wonder what Micah would be doing on November 5<sup>th</sup> if he was living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

November 5 is a day that some Kiwis remember Guy Fawkes on 1605, his failed attempt to blow up Parliament and murder the King. Would Micah be lighting firecrackers?

Or would Micah, with his concern for peace and justice and devotion and walking humbly before God, be remembering Parihaka Day, the worst act of state terrorism that probably ever occurred on New Zealand soil.

On the 5 November 1881, the Maori village of Parihaka, in Taranaki, was invaded by 1500 soldiers.

The people of Parihaka had been engaged in peaceful and non-violent protest.

They had lost over 3 million acres of their land. The Government had promised them special reserves in return, but never met their promises.

The Government kept taking more and more land. The surveyors would come out during the day and mark out the land. The people of Parihaka would sneak out at night and move the markers.

On 5 November 1881, Parihaka was invaded. The whole village was arrested and sent to prison. The New Zealand army then totally destroyed the village. It took them over two weeks. Pulled down every single Maori house. Then another two months to destroy the crops. During this time, Maori women and girls were raped, by New Zealand government soldiers, which led to an outbreak of syphilis in the Maori community.

Why am I telling you this? Because the whole village of Parihaka was based on living out the words of the prophet Micah. This is what it says on their leader Te Whiti's gravestone:

"He was a man who did great deeds in suppressing  
evil so that peace may reign as a means of salvation to all people on earth ...

That's Micah's vision. Peace. This is what Te Whiti said as the army approached.

"If any come with guns and swords, be not afraid. If they smite you, smite not in return. If ... settlers ... flee from their farms [back] to the town as in the war of old, enter not you into their houses, touch not their goods nor their cattle."

This is not pie in the sky stuff, this is Micah's concern for peace and justice and devotion and walking humbly before God, being lived right here in New Zealand.

So I have a hunch the prophet Micah would refuse to buy fireworks on Guy Fawkes Day. But he wouldn't be a killjoy. Because he'd then probably light candles and throw a party in honour of Parihaka.

Because isn't that Micah 6:8: What is God seeking from you? Nothing but to do justice, to love devotion, and to walk humbly with your God.

I simply wonder what on earth the prophet Micah would say to us today? What would he say to Alan Wickwar? And to an Opawa Spring Clean? And about how Christians act differently on November 5? And about some of the pain and disappointments of my own life?

What is God seeking from us? Nothing but to do justice, to love devotion, and to walk humbly with our God.