

Rev. Anne J. Scalfaro  
1 September 2024

10:30 a.m. MT Worship  
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Calvary Baptist Church  
Denver, Colorado

## ***“Together, We Serve: Through Formation & Engagement”***

Seventh sermon in *Part III: Together, We Serve*  
of the summer series: *Together, We are Community*

### ***Micah 6:1-8***

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

*NOTE: A sermon is a spoken word event. This manuscript served as a guide but is not exact to what was preached in the moment.*

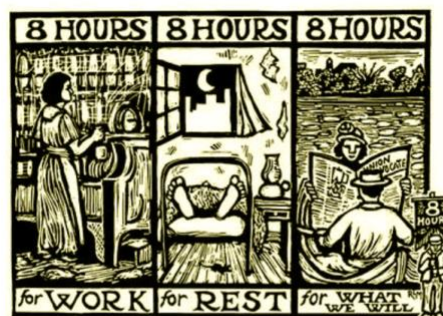
Happy Labor Sunday, Calvary!

Did you know that such a thing, existed? Labor Sunday?! Who knew? It’s the oft-overlooked companion to Labor Day, which is tomorrow, on Monday of course.

A bit of history for us, with gratitude to Rev. Laura Mayo for relaying this history so succinctly for us:

“The first Labor Day was celebrated Tuesday, Sept. 5, 1882, in New York City, thanks to the efforts of that city’s Central Labor Union. Leading up to that first Labor Day, going back as far as 1866,<sup>1</sup> there was a massive march by sweatshop workers in New York. They demanded a shortening of the 12- to 14-hour workday. The workers’ chant was, “*Eight*

*hours for work, eight hours for rest. Eight hours for what we will.*”



*Harpers Weekly, May 15, 1886*

A cartoon in *Harpers Weekly*, published on May 15, 1886 depicts these three 8 hour segments. In the first panel for “work”, a person stands, cleaning. In the second panel for “rest”, a person sleeps, feet sticking out of the covers. In the third panel for “what we will,” two people relax in a canoe on a lake, one reading the newspaper. In the bottom righthand corner

<sup>1</sup> Shore Griffin, “A Brief History of Labor Day and why it should be Celebrated,” *Jean & Alexander Heard Libraries of Vanderbilt University* (6 Sept. 2021), accessed on Sept. 1, 2024 at

<https://newsonline.library.vanderbilt.edu/2021/09/a-brief-history-of-labor-day-and-why-it-should-be-celebrated/>.

is a picketer with a sign that says, “8 hours!”<sup>2</sup>

Despite these cries from the public, “the demand for an eight-hour workday was considered radical and outrageously unreasonable by politicians and industrial leaders alike.”<sup>3</sup> Side note: the 40-hour work week did not become law until 1940!<sup>4</sup>

“[After that first Labor Day in 1882], Labor Day was held again the next year [and the next], and by 1885, the idea of Labor Day had spread throughout most of the industrial centers of our country. The shouts for justice, fair wages, a reasonable work day and more were heard in the Haymarket Square riot in Chicago in 1886, in the Pullman strike in 1894 and in multiple other strikes spawned by these two.”<sup>5</sup>

“U.S. President Grover Cleveland and the U.S. Congress were so concerned about the rising tide of discontent among working

people that on June 28, 1894, a law recognizing Labor Day was approved. And [get this! 15 years] later, by a resolution of the American Federation of Labor convention of 1909, the Sunday preceding Labor Day was adopted as Labor Sunday and dedicated to the spiritual and educational aspects of the labor movement.”<sup>6</sup>

It was to be “a day of meditation on the fact that Jesus was a Carpenter—[a laborer, who will a worker himself] preached the ethics of justice for all workers.”<sup>7</sup> “The (Northern) Presbyterian Department of Church and Labor asked ministers to preach on workers' rights on the day before Labor Day...and the effort was a great success. Some labor unions gathered members in their halls and marched together to church to hear the special messages. Newspapers reprinted the sermons the next day, and ministers were invited to [come and] address workers at their shops and factories. These events brought together people who did not often mingle. [As

<sup>2</sup> Griffin, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Laura Mayo, “How might we honor those who labor for us and with us?” *Baptist News Global* (30 Aug. 2024), accessed on Sept. 1, 2024 at <https://baptistnews.com/article/how-might-we-honor-those-who-labor-for-us-and-with-us/>.

<sup>4</sup> Griffin, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Mayo, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Mayo, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Janine Giordano Drake, “Labor Sunday: How American clergy in the 1920s turned from solidarity with workers to the mythology of the Good Christian Businessman,” *The University of Chicago Divinity School* (7 Sept. 2020), accessed on Sept. 1, 2024 at <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/articles/labor-sunday>.

one minister noted:] ‘Both sides discovered that each had been misunderstanding the other. Many a preacher got a new vision of what the labor movement stands for; and many a workingman, listening to the minister’s Labor Day address, [finally] caught a glimpse of the purpose of the Church, which he had never dreamed of.’”<sup>8</sup> Finally it all wasn’t just about the hereafter, someone was actually speaking to something that mattered in their life *here and now*.

Yet, the reason none of us have heard of Labor Sunday is because, as History Professor, Janine Giordano Drake reminds us, this effort was very short-lived. “If Labor Sunday was born of a strategic alliance between major Protestant denominations and the American Federation of Labor, the unmaking of Labor Sunday resulted from a new set of strategic alliances. After the First World War, the Federal Council of Churches, representing themselves as advocates for workers, boldly dismissed the claim that workers needed unions to thrive as people and experience social

mobility. That year, John D. Rockefeller donated millions of dollars to the Federal Council to execute an anti-union campaign that celebrated the possibility of “Christian brotherhood” on the shop floor without “selfish” trade-union intermediaries.”<sup>9</sup>

By 1921 [just 11 years after its inception], Labor Sunday had largely become a day to reflect on the virtues of *good employers not good workers*. “The myth of “[good] Christian businessmen” [with good intentions maybe but no good practices to back those up!] had become the Christian [solution] for the perpetual inequalities of workers.”<sup>10</sup> You know it was the whole sentiment like: ‘*Just make sure the boss is a nice Christian guy and all will be well.*’

*Well...* not so much right? That simply never works. A century later, we still feel the effects, Drake writes.<sup>11</sup> For example, many Americans struggle to access unemployment benefits. And while church soup kitchens and food pantries are busier than ever, many churches do not address systemic ills; faith has become personal and private,

<sup>8</sup> Elesha Coffman, “Do They Know It’s Labor Sunday?” *Christianity Today* (19 Aug. 2009), accessed on Sept. 1, 2024 at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2009/08/do-they-know-its-labor-sunday/>.

<sup>9</sup> Drake, *ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Drake, *ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Drake, *ibid*.

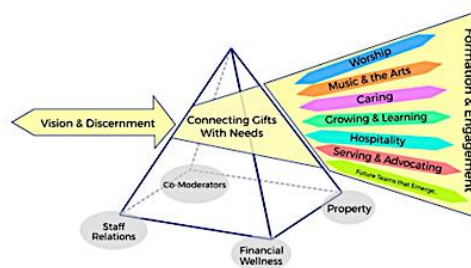
without much public witness. But perhaps this is why Micah 6:8 historically was used as a rallying call on Labor Sunday and still is in some churches that observe it.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, on this Labor Sunday, I'd like to invite us Calvary, to use Micah 6:8 for our own workers' chant, if you will. If union organizers were chanting: "*Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest. Eight hours for what we will*" dividing the day into thirds for a balanced, healthy life, how might we—as Christ-organizers, as Jesus-followers, as faith-laborers—divide our efforts in ministry into thirds? One third: do justice. One third: love kindness. One third: walk humbly with God. How might we think about our Christian *Formation & Engagement* in these Micah 6:8 proportions?

How might we imagine our Christian lives receiving an equal diet of these three components, so that we ourselves are not only holistically spiritually formed beings, engaged with the world around us in meaningful ways, but so that *ALL people in our*

*world* have the opportunity to be holistically formed beings as well, able not just to survive, but to thrive?

In the final portion of our summer series—*Together, We are Community—Together, We Serve*, we've been exploring the boards and deacon teams of our new lay leadership structure. And last, but certainly not least, is the area of our Ministry Advisory Board called *Formation & Engagement*. These are the Rainbow Stripes in our prism diagram.



The Light of Vision and Discernment, that is, the Wisdom of God, the Community, and Each of Our Voices shines through the Base or Foundation of our church structure, staff, leadership, and resources—and as we Connect Gifts with Needs—the effect is the beautiful and varied ministries of the church that

<sup>12</sup> Ed Middleton, "Liturgy for a Labor Sunday Service," *United Church of Christ*, accessed on Sept. 1, 2024 at <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/em-liturgy/>.

impact and change lives, the ministries of Formation & Engagement:

- Worship, Music, & the Arts
- Growing & Learning (small groups, church school classes, spiritual formation and practices)
- Caring Ministries, in hard times and good times, including Member Care and Pastoral Care
- Hospitality, including all things Food and all things Fun—potlucks, Trunk or Treat, Gathering Sunday, and other Congregational Life Events
- Mission, Service, & Advocacy Ministries
- As well as Ministries that are Yet-To-Be

The Rainbow Striped Areas of *Formation & Engagement* encompass all of the programmatic ministries at Calvary; it is the heart of our life together—the pulse of who we’ve been, and the heartbeat of all that we’re becoming. Nothing about the ministries in *Formation & Engagement* are solitary or static. Though they are done in community, they are spiritually forming us, individually, as followers of Christ, on an ongoing, evolving basis. There is nothing linear

about these ministries; they are cyclical and intersecting, intertwined.

For example:

- Sometimes studying the Bible leads us to care about advocacy work (like reading Micah 6;8!); it changes our priorities and values.
- Other times, engaging in service and advocacy is the very thing that leads us to worship, because we realize we’re tired and need to refuel and rest in God’s presence.
- Or perhaps mission work leads us back to study scripture because something in our lived experience in the present is not matching up with our learned faith from the past.
- Or perhaps it is while we are in a small group, engaging in a spiritual formation practice together, that we are able then, to develop close enough relationships that we truly know how to care well for one another in crisis.
- Or maybe it’s when we’re at a fun event, laughing and connecting, that we realize we share a passion with someone else, and a new area of ministry emerges.

All of these areas influence and impact one another. In our graphic, the Rainbow Stripes of Formation & Engagement are clearly delineated stripes so they are easy to read and create ministry teams within, but in a real rainbow, the colors all kind of blend into one another, don't they? It's hard to tell where one color starts and another begins.

Well, that's how Formation & Engagement works too. These are colorful ministries in their own right, but when they're blended together and set side by side, they create a beautiful rainbow of impact in the world, a rainbow of God's promise and purpose for our lives, which is what Micah reminds his people of chapter 6, verse 8: *"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?"*

But first, some context.<sup>13</sup> The prophet Micah lived at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE; his ministry spanned over 60 years. Micah had seen a few things in his day. "There had been a time of great prosperity that was immediately followed by a steep decline in the social and

economic well-being of the people. The disparities in the life of the "upper class" and the "common person" were vast. There was internal political pressure from corrupt kings, untrustworthy spiritual leadership, and external political pressures from nations that wanted to invade and take advantage of people."<sup>14</sup>

Sound familiar?

In chapter 1 of his prophecy, Micah is connecting God's distress and anger with the operations of the "places high up"—that is, the big cities, like Samaria and Jerusalem where spiritual and political leadership was corrupt. Micah, by the way, lived outside of these cities in the countryside suburbs, and his vantage point allowed him to see some things that those on the inside couldn't see. A prophet's job was, after all, to hold the people in power accountable; they served as a check and balance to the edicts of kings and priests, the powers held in government and religion.

Back then, of course, the people put great hope in their kings,

<sup>13</sup> The context and exegesis work that follows is drawn from sermons I preached at Calvary on August 22, 2021 and November 13, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan Phaneuf, "What does Micah 6:8 mean? Living out Justice, Kindness, and Humility in 2020," *Emmaus*

*Bible Ministries* (22 Oct. 2020), accessed on Nov. 12, 2022 at <https://emmausbibleministries.org/blog/2020/10/21/what-does-micah-68-mean>.

just as we do in our Presidents (or Presidential Candidates!) and they also put great hope in their priests, just as you might put in your Pastors. But in doing so—then and now—that effectively means they’re not turning to God, they’re turning to human leaders to be their “Savior” or “Saving Grace.” And it wasn’t working then, and it’s not working now either.

Which brings us to Micah 6. In verse 3 God asks the people: *“What have I done that has caused you to treat me like this? How have I wearied you?”*<sup>15</sup>

God is distressed. The people are desperate. And unfortunately, we humans seem to think that desperate times call for desperate measures. Through a series of questions, the people beg for clarity from God about how to get themselves out of their painful predicament.

They start bargaining with God, offering things that they simply cannot give. No one has thousands of rams to offer as a sacrifice. And no one, in the ancient world, would even know where to find tens of thousands of rivers (this is pre-Google

maps remember!?), and even if they could find these rivers, they couldn’t turn their waters into oil, even if they wanted to. This is the stuff of sci-fi, not faith.

But then, they move from the outlandish and impossible to the disgusting and displeasing: *“Shall I give the firstborn for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”* (Micah 6:7) NO! This is not what God wants from them and honestly? They know it.<sup>16</sup> It shows just how desperate they are – how afraid and out of control they feel about their lives. It’s like they are so mad at God they are giving up and saying, *“Nothing will be enough for God anyway, so why even try,”* while at the same time, in desperation trying to figure out will be THE THING that will finally make God happy, no matter how illogical and impossible that thing is.

Do you see what’s happening here? The people are trying to think of what will *appease* God, instead of what will *please* God.

This is a spiritual temptation we all have, isn’t it? How many of us have prayed at some point:

<sup>15</sup> Micah 6:3

<sup>16</sup> Shauna Hannan, “Commentary on Micah [1:3-5]; 5:2-5a; 6:6-8,” *WorkingPreacher.org* (11 Nov. 2018), accessed on Nov. 10, 2022 at

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/micah-2/commentary-on-micah-13-5-52-5a-66-8>.

*“God, if you just get me out of this sticky situation, if you just heal my family member, if you just give me some kind of sign right now...then I promise...I’ll never do such and such behavior again, I’ll go to church every Sunday, I’ll spend my life serving those in need.”* Like it or not, we have probably all thought at some point in our faith journey that God could be placated. That if we do certain things a certain way, then God will answer our prayers in the way we want them to be answered.

But God does not want to be appeased. God wants to be pleased! And it’s for the sake of God’s people, not God!

And this is where Micah 6:8 comes in as a powerful reminder for what we already know to be true: God does not want our grand, unrealistic intentions that we know we’ll always fall short of. God wants our faithful actions that are doable. God wants our walk, not our talk.

*“Don’t have a calf who is a year old?”* No problem, Micah says. *“Don’t have access to thousands of rams and tens of thousands of rivers of oil?”* “No problem,” Micah says, *“nobody else does either.”* *“Don’t have children?”* “No problem; God wouldn’t want your firstborn even if you did.”<sup>17</sup> You see, the Good News is that what God desires from us is within our capacity to give no matter who we are or where we’re from or how much money we have.

And THIS is why Micah offers up a different question: What does *the Lord* require of you?

There is a decided shift from first person (“I”) language in verses 6 and 7 to third person (“the Lord”) language in verse 8.<sup>18</sup> Instead of focusing on what *I* think the Lord requires of *me*, Micah is asking me to listen to what *the Lord* is actually saying!

It’s not about “me/I” at all. As one pastor notes: “Often we believe sacrificial worship begins with ourselves (our gifts

<sup>17</sup> Shauna Hannan, “Commentary on Micah [1:3-5]; 5:2-5a; 6:6-8,” *WorkingPreacher.org* (11 Nov. 2018), accessed on Nov. 10, 2022 at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/micah-2/commentary-on-micah-13-5-52-5a-66-8>.

<sup>18</sup> Jin Yang Kim, “Micah 6:1-8 “What Does God Expect of You? A Pilgrimage of Reconciliation with God and

with Our Neighbor” *The World Council of Churches*. Accessed on August 22, 2021 at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/micah-61-8-what-does-god-expect-of-you-a-pilgrimage-of-reconciliation-with-god-and-with-our-neighbor-by-jin-yang-kim>.



and our goodness), but really, it ought to begin with God. It's not about responding to "our will," but "God's will," and what is God's will? Well, to put it bluntly – "instead of 'material commodity,' God wants faithful relationships and reliable solidarity [with others]."<sup>19</sup> Or in other words, God wants to us to be spiritually formed and focused, in relationship with and caring for one another, and engaged in the transformation of the world, creating the kin-dom of God, on earth as it is in heaven.

Doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God – these are things every single person can do. And these three phrases encapsulate what we here at Calvary seek to do in the areas of *Formation & Engagement*.

The first phrase Micah uses is "do justice," or *mishpat*, in the Hebrew. We are to right the wrongs of this world. Think Labor Strikes. We are to look at what is unfair and make it fair. We are to emphasize equity over equality. *Mishpat* ("justice") is God's will for the world and it happens through *Doing*, Micah says, not endless

*Discussing or Debating.*

*Mishpat* is an action verb; we are to create and enact justice.

And in terms of the Rainbow Stripes of Formation & Engagement, our *Mishpat* ministries at Calvary are the mission partners we engage with, the advocacy we accomplish together, the ways we serve with and alongside others to bring about not only short-term fixes, but long-term justice.

Here at Calvary, we support doing *mishpat* through ministries like:

*Family Promise*, as we form relationships with families at risk of/or experiencing homelessness by providing shelter, meals, and a spectrum of supportive services as they obtain permanent stability.

*Habitat for Humanity*, which makes home ownership attainable for people who otherwise would not have the means to make a down payment on a home but can put in labor towards that goal. "Sweat equity" is what they call it.

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<sup>19</sup> Kim, *ibid*.

*Kentucky Circle Village*, which provides insanely affordable rent for seniors, so that they have safe and stable housing in a community with other seniors, which helps prevent loneliness.

*Blessings*, which provides support and hope through bus passes, grocery/gas cards, food bags, and the compassionate listening ear of our volunteers.

*Jewish Family Service*, just down the street, which provides comprehensive services to vulnerable individuals and families, including Aging Care and Connections, Disability Programs, Employment Support, Housing Stability, Food Security, and Mental Health Counseling.

Then we have advocacy groups like:

*The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists*, that works to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in churches.

*Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence*, which works on legislation related to gun safety, background checks, safe gun storage, and mental health measures.

*The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado*, which works to educate and advocate for a number of legislative measures and policies around those who are vulnerable in our society. The Interfaith Alliance speaks out about hate crimes and religious freedom issues for people of all faiths, in the same way that the *Baptist Joint Committee* does so on the national level.

*Soul 2 Soul Sisters* works to dismantle systemic racism through educational “Facing Racism” cohorts, education related to ballot measures around reproductive rights and voting rights, supporting black women through multi-layered healing opportunities, and creating avenues for reparations for those who identify as white to give money to concretely make a difference for how the enslavement of black people has led to generations upon generations of inequalities and injustices for black Americans.

Just as their work is about helping us see the big picture of racism in our history and systems and how our individual actions can make a difference, Calvary’s partnership with *New Hope Baptist Church*, which is about building bridges between

a predominately white and black congregation—as we seek to build relationships, on a local level, with people of different races. The *Reading Program with Stedman Elementary* is an important part of this, as we join together to mentor confidence and increase literacy with third graders.

Another partnership we support through car donation is *Driven2Donate*, which helps the non-profit, *Step Denver*—a residential recovery program that helps men with no resources and nowhere else to turn. Their addiction recovery program is centered around the four pillars of sobriety, work, accountability, and community.

All of these ministries and more are ways that Calvary engages with *Mishpat* (justice) in Micah 6:8. And we are always discerning new needs, and new areas for how we can stand alongside the marginalized and stand with those who are fighting for their rights.

So, definitely, **an important third of a healthy, formed and engaged spiritual life involves *mishpat*, ministries of service, justice, and advocacy.**

**The second third of a healthy, formed and engaged spiritual life involves *hesed* in the Hebrew, “to love kindness.”**

*Hesed* is not just about being nice. *Hesed* is a deep, covenantal relationality,<sup>20</sup> such like committed partners have with each other<sup>21</sup> or that the people of God have with God.<sup>22</sup> *Hesed* requires intentionality in developing relationships and implies loyalty, love, and long-term commitment of care. We must allow ourselves to be cared for by others and to receive care in return.

These are the ministries at Calvary that are related to member care, pastoral care, fellowship and congregational life—whether that be Congregational Care Teams, the VIP/Lifeline Ministry that Pastor Mary coordinates, or the church wide events that Minister Angela helps coordinate. These ministries also include Meal Trains for those who are in treatment or recovering from surgery, cards of encouragement for those we haven’t seen in a while, and the friendly smiles of ushers and greeters (in person or virtual!) and those who and

<sup>20</sup> Howard, *ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 20:13

<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 7:9, Ruth 2:20

coordinate host New Member Fellowships.

It's in relationship to and with each other that we learn and know how to show up for each other. How to live in covenant community. Sure, being a nice person is great, but you certainly don't need church to learn how to be nice. *Hesed* is something much deeper, and something that is so very needed in our harshly divided world where people stand on one side of the fence and point fingers at people on the other side, without ever engaging in conversations of care or concern with them.

If nothing else, the ministries of Formation & Engagement related to Care and Hospitality and Congregational Life teach us how to relate—even how to have fun!—with people who are different than us in all kinds of ways, and with people who are in different seasons of life than us, and perhaps who are even part of a different generation!

**The final third of a healthily formed and engaged spiritual life involves *tsana*', "to walk humbly with God."** In Hebrew, this is best defined as the

opposite of pride, and coupled with the verb to walk—we get this idea of an active humility. Not a “slumped down, woe is me, I am nobody” kind of humility. But the kind of humility that gives glory to God by letting love shine through our lives in palpable ways because we know God is Love and *we know we need* God to help us be the fullest versions of ourselves that we can be.

*This* kind of humility begins with resting in the presence of God and knowing that God is God and we are not. It begins with awe and wonder, which is what we receive in worship, isn't it? Through music and the arts? Even through the teachings of scripture and the spiritual practices in small groups and classes that invite us into prayer, contemplation, and meditation? A deeper communion with God and ourselves...A deeper knowing that we are connected to the universe and other creatures in powerful ways.

Walking humbly with God in the Hebrew means “doing something very deliberately.”<sup>23</sup> Just as to BE in God's presence through worship or music or the

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<sup>23</sup> Rolf Jacobson, Joy J. Moore, and Kathryn Schifferdecker, “Narrative Lectionary 511: Micah - November 13, 2022,” *Working Preacher.org* (6 Nov.

2022), accessed on Nov. 10, 2022 at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/podcasts/511-micah-nov-13-2022>.

arts or Bible Study and the Study of Scripture is a deliberate action/choice, so too, is to *tsana*’, or to walk humbly. This is a daily practice, an hour by hour choice, a step by step journey.

It's why the ministries of *tsana* occupy a third of a healthy, formed and engaged spiritual life. When we come to worship we remember to orient and re-orient our life around God. When we hear the organ fill the sanctuary or the choir sing an anthem, or see the light streaming through the stained glass, or gather around the communion table, we remember our Creator and the Powerful, All-Encompassing Presence of God Around Us and Within Us.

That same sense of Presence and Awe can be found in Bible Studies and Book Groups and theological discussions; we have those “aha” moments that open us up an avenue to understanding of God or the world that we didn’t have before. In truth, to learn is to be humble. Learning new things requires a posture of humility. And worship, music, and faith formation opportunities help teach us that humility by repeated experience, over and over and over again. It’s like

muscle memory. It’s not something we can just ‘achieve’ once. It requires repetition. A continual showing up.

*Tsana* reminds us that sometimes we are to BE in God’s presence without producing anything for consumption or doing anything for others. We are simply to rest in the awe and wonder and beauty and presence of God.

These are the Rainbow Stripes of Worship, Music, the Arts, Church School Classes, Small Groups, Spiritual Formation Practices and the like.

Now you can see why the Scripture guiding our *Formation & Engagement* Deacons is Micah 6:8. Because ALL of these ministries fall into these three thirds of the life of faith of which Micah speaks and of which God requires of us and of which we are fully capable of doing!—*mishpat*, *hesed*, and *tsana*’.

When you think of Formation & Engagement, I invite you to think of all three of these thirds, and trust that these areas are intertwined, not separate. When engaged in healthy, equal measure, Micah says this is how we live fully and faithfully with

God and others. Ask yourself if you are engaging in these three areas in equal measure, maybe not all at once, but over the course of different seasons are you leaning into them all in different ways? Or do you only favor one or two? Are you working 12-14 hours in some areas while completing neglecting others?

Because when we engage with them in equal measure, we make sure our faith has a purpose beyond just ourselves...a purpose that pleases God and uplifts others.

Which brings me full circle back to Labor Day, and Labor Sunday. How we show up for workers in all fields, how we engage and advocate for the rights and livelihoods of women, immigrants, refugees, Palestinians, Jews, Trans Folks, Black Leaders, Indigenous Communities, The Unhoused, The Under Employed or Unemployed, Veterans, those mentally ill or without access to health care, those dying in occupied war zones—how we show up for them and engage in their rights and life and dignity, well...it speaks directly to how well we are spiritually formed in

our understanding that ALL people are God's beloved children, deserving of thriving and dignity.

There's an old labor song, made famous in the 1912 women's textile workers strike in Massachusetts, called "Bread and Roses." "The song calls for not only enough labor that all might have enough Bread or food to eat; it also calls for roses, for [all to have] beauty and dignity, in the fullness of their life experience:"<sup>24</sup>

*As we come marching,  
marching, in the beauty of the  
day,  
A million darkened kitchens, a  
thousand mill-lofts gray...  
...Our days shall not be sweated  
from birth until life closes—  
Hearts starve as well as bodies:  
Give us Bread, but give us  
Roses.*

*As we come marching,  
marching, unnumbered women  
dead  
[As we] Go crying through our  
singing their ancient song of  
Bread;  
Small art and love and beauty  
their trudging spirits knew—  
Yes, it is Bread we fight for—but  
we fight for Roses, too.*

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<sup>24</sup> Mayo, *ibid.*

*As we come marching,  
marching, we bring the Greater  
Days—  
... a sharing of life's glories:  
Bread and Roses, Bread and  
Roses.*<sup>25</sup>

Indeed. *Hearts* starve as well as  
bodies. So give us Bread AND  
give us Roses.

We all need *Bread* to feed our  
bodies and resources to care for  
our basic needs. That is *Living*.  
And we all need *Roses*, or  
dignity and beauty in our lives.  
That is *Thriving*.

And so we begin again, at the  
Table, with Bread, that helps us  
LIVE, and we embody practices  
that give dignity and humanity  
and beauty to others, the “Micah  
6:8 Roses” that allow all to  
THRIVE:

- 1) Approaching the Table, we  
‘*tsana*, we kneel humbly  
before God seeking  
forgiveness and are reminded  
with awe of God’s  
unconditional love.
- 2) At the Table we *hesed*, we  
stand alongside each other, a  
covenant community—saints  
above and saints below—  
knowing we need one

another in the journey of life  
and faith.

- 3) Going forth from the Table,  
we are strengthened and  
nourished to *mishpat*, to  
serve others and do justice in  
the world.

Give us Bread, O  
God...AND...Give us Roses.

May this be so, not just on  
Labor Sunday but in our labor  
every day the sun rises.

Amen.

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<sup>25</sup> James Oppenheim, *American Magazine* (December  
1911), Colver Publishing House, p. 214.