

**The Fourth Sunday After the Epiphany**  
**Cycle A**  
**Revised**

**Micah 6:1–8**

The introduction to this book locates work of Micah of Moresheth (Moresheth-gath, near the border with Philistia) during the reigns of the Judean Kings Jotham (750–735 BCE), Ahaz (735–715 BCE), and Hezekiah (715–687 BCE). H. B. Huffmon calls our lesson a *covenant lawsuit* (Hebrew: *riv*, poorly translated in the NRSV as “controversy”) between Yahweh and the people of Yahweh, in which the mountains and the earth’s foundations act as the judges. God’s complaint against Israel is that God’s people have substituted cultic correctness for personal righteousness and expect to buy God’s forgiveness by their many offerings (verses 6-7). The hyperbole extends in verse 7 to imagining the horror of the offering of one’s first-born to the god Moloch, “the abomination of the Ammonites” (1 Kings 11:7). Would the cultic offering of one’s child recompense God sufficiently for one’s sin? The much beloved verse 8 amounts to a resounding “no!” to such a preposterous suggestion. Justice, faithfulness (NRSV “kindness”), and integrity of life before God comprise the divine requirements for God’s people, not dramatic, ostentatious displays of temple piety.

**Psalm 15**

This *pilgrimage psalm*, in particular, a liturgy for admission to the temple in Jerusalem like Psalm 24, may also amount to a request for long-term residence there. Would the psalmist refer to Solomon’s temple as a “tabernacle” (Hebrew *’ohel*, “tent”)? Yes. See, for instance, Psalm 27:7 (*BCP* translates “shelter”), 61:4 (*BCP* translates “house”) where, despite the fanciful translations of the *BCP*, *’ohel* clearly refers to the Jerusalem temple. So 61:4 does not refer to the “tabernacle” the wandering Israelites set up in the Sinai desert, but to the gleaming limestone of the Jerusalem temple. Who then qualified to enter this tabernacle? Although priestly law set rigid standards of physical purity for admission to the temple, the entrance liturgies of the Psalter do not; they stress instead personal righteousness as the single requirement for admission to God’s house.

**1 Corinthians 1:18–31**

Paul believed that Christ was the “wisdom of God,” the creative source of all reality. Nevertheless, those who did not know Christ could not understand this and considered the faith and practice of Christians “foolishness.” Paul’s opponents in Corinth had adopted an esoteric wisdom as the basis for their Christianity that exalted their knowledge and shamed other Christians, thus leading to division in the church. The nature of this esoteric “wisdom” becomes increasingly clear over the course of 1–2 Corinthians.

**Matthew 5:1–12**

The Beatitudes occur in an alternative form in Luke 6:20–23 where they appear at the beginning of Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain. They derive from a lost document common to Matthew and Luke most researchers simply call “Q,” a written collection of sayings of Jesus and John the Baptist. Both the Greek and Jewish world knew such collections of blessings, often as a way of eulogizing especially admirable people. Matthew’s version of the Beatitudes puts special emphasis on the church as the community of the end of time.