

“The God Who Pardons”
Micah 7:18-20
(Preached at Trinity, March 26, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Micah is pondering the wonder of God's grace.
 - A. In **Chapter 1** Micah described God's fearful judgments.
Micah 1:3-4 NAU - "behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. ⁴ The mountains will melt under Him And the valleys will be split, Like wax before the fire, Like water poured down a steep place."
 - B. Against this background of sin and judgment Micah has put on display God's redeeming grace.
Micah 4:1-2 NAU - "And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. ² Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
Micah 7:7 NAU - "But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me."
2. Micah concludes his prophecy by turning the hearts of God's redeemed people to ponder this question: "Who is a God like You?"
It is a rhetorical question with an obvious answer. Nothing can compare with God.
3. Last week we spent some time pondering the greatness of God.
 - A. God is glorious in His holiness
 1. Holiness means separateness. God is separate from all that is ordinary. He is above everything.
 2. God's holiness also implies moral perfection – God is perfect in holiness. God is separate from all that is not holy. He is separate from sin – no sin has ever existed in the presence of God.
 - B. God is glorious in His infinite power
One of the ways to describe God is, "He is able."
He is able to do His good holy will. Nothing is too great for Him.
We use the term, omnipotent – God is all powerful.
 - C. God is glorious in His absolute sovereignty. His sovereignty describes His absolute, independent rule over all things.
 1. God receives counsel from none. He is answerable to none. God's sovereignty encompasses His other attributes. He displays Himself according to His prerogative.
 2. God's dominion is absolute - God makes all law, holds all authority
 3. God is working out all things according to His good pleasure. He has chosen to redeem a people for Himself according to His good pleasure.

But as I pointed out last time, Micah is very specific in this passage. He is directing our attention to a very particular question. Micah has his heart fixed upon God's wondrous grace.

Micah 7:18 NAU - "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?"

How is it God passes over the rebellious acts of His people?

- I. There are some things that are impossible for God.
 - A. God cannot deny His Divine essence.
 1. It's been asked, can God create a rock too big for Him to lift. Skeptics claim that this calls into question God's omnipotence since He either cannot create such a huge rock or He cannot lift such a huge rock. But God's omnipotence means God can do whatever is possible to be done. God cannot do that which is impossible to do. The impossible cannot be made possible by adding more power.
 - a. It is impossible for God to end His own existence. God cannot cease to be.
 - b. It is impossible for God to create another god. The other god would be a creature.
 - c. A rock too large for God to lift would have to be an infinite rock which is impossible since no part of creation is infinite. Only God is infinite.
 2. Paul reminds us that God cannot lie. **Titus 1:2 NAU** - "in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,"
 3. God cannot deny Himself. He cannot do that which is contrary to His Divine nature. Thus, He cannot lie.
 - B. These impossibilities bring us face to face with the problem of our sin.
 1. It's easy to comprehend our condemnation. The Bible makes clear the consequences of sin. **Romans 6:23 NAU** - "For the wages of sin is death" **Romans 1:18 NAU** - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"
 2. We also understand the universal corruption of humanity. **Romans 3:23 NAU** - "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," **Romans 3:10-12 NAU** - "as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."
 - C. As we think about the matter of our salvation we must consider the perfections of God's Divine nature.
 1. He is infinitely holy. It is impossible for God's holy character to be defiled by sin.
 2. He is also perfect in His judgments. He is a just and righteous Judge. He must punish the evildoer. It is impossible for Him to allow the guilty to go unpunished. He cannot deny His holiness. He cannot judge unjustly.

3. Micah declares:
Micah 7:18 NAU - "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity
 And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His
 possession?"
 - a. Iniquity refers to guilt. Micah declares that God pardon's iniquity.
 - b. The word for "rebellious act" is from the Hebrew word that means
 transgression which is how the ESV translates it.
 How is it that God pardons transgressions and guilt?
3. God must judge sin. He is holy. He is just.
4. God cannot simply overlook sin. He cannot offer universal amnesty.
 This is an impossibility.

II. How is it that God pardons iniquity?

- A. How did God make the impossible possible
 1. We sing in the hymn –
Who is a pard'ning God like thee? Or who has grace so rich and free?
 2. How is it that God can be a pardoning God?
 Only by God's wondrous grace. *Or who has grace so rich and free?*
 Grace is God giving something that is undeserved and cannot be earned.
 God is also merciful – Mercy is God not giving what IS deserved.
 3. But how is this possible?
 - a. God's grace is great, but not so great that He would allow an
 unrepentant sinner into His presence. His holiness would come
 under assault. His justice would be perverted.
 God cannot grant pardon without first removing the guilt.
 - b. God provided a way that only His infinite wisdom could devise.
 God provided a substitute.
Isaiah 53:6 KJV - "All we like sheep have gone astray; we
 have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath
laid on him the iniquity of us all."
 - c. He sent His own Son to take upon Himself the sins of His people
 and then suffer under God's wrath in their stead.
 Jesus satisfied God's justice by His death and fulfilled the Law's
 demands by His perfect obedience.
 - d. Through Christ God is just or righteous in granting us pardon.
Romans 3:24-26 NAU - "being justified as a gift by His
 grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵
 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood
 through faith. *This was to demonstrate His righteousness,*
 because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins
 previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say, of His*
 righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just
and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."
 That God would be righteous in forgiving our guilt.

5. There is no other way. No other Redeemer.
Acts 4:12 NAU - "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."
John 14:6 NAU - "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 6. Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb. Through Jesus God passes over our sin and rebellion.
Micah 7:18 NAU - "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?"
 7. Through Jesus Christ God casts our sin into the sea of forgetfulness.
Micah 7:19 NAU - "He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea."
- C. What would motivate God to do such an act?
1. God chose to redeem us by His great love.
Micah 7:18 NAU - "He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love."
Ephesians 2:4-7 NAU - "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
 2. Micah reminds us that God delights in His love. It's the frequently used word, רַחֵם.
 Here it is translated "unchanging love." It is sometimes translated "mercy." God delights in mercy. It is by God's wondrous mercy that He rescued us from the fires of hell.
 3. Micah says God takes delight in redeeming His people.
 - a. Too often we see God as harsh and wrathful. Yes, God is angry at sin, but He takes delight in saving His people. He takes delight in loving us.
 - b. Paul uses the word lavish – super abundant grace.
Ephesians 1:7-8 NAU - "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight"
 - b. Do we delight in Him? Or do we serve Him out of fear?
 Oh how we need to learn extravagant love for Christ. The kind of love Mary demonstrated as she poured perfume on Christ.
John 12:3 NAU - "Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

Conclusion:

1. From God's love came the gift of His Son. From His love He has adopted us as His own children. This is His covenant promise –
Micah 7:20 NAU - "unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old."
2. This is the story of the Bible. The Father has loved us and elected us unto salvation. The Son came out of obedience to the Father and out of love for His Bride. The Holy Spirit loves us and abides in us. The chief fruit of His presence in us is Love.
Romans 5:5-6 NAU - "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."
3. I'll close the Book of Micah with the words of the Apostle Paul.
2 Corinthians 13:14 NAU - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."