

God's Message to Us in Micah

Halifax, NS

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Introduction

This afternoon, we come to Micah in our sermon series that walks us through all the books of the Bible.

- Micah is a very encouraging book.
 - The great lesson in this book is that even though God's people are full of sin and He punishes them severely, He will restore them—and Christ is at the centre of their restoration.
- The book of Micah is structured with three cycles.
 - And each cycle charges God's people with wickedness and describes their punishments, but then tells of how the LORD will restore them.
 - He is so amazingly faithful to His church.
 - In the second cycle, right at the core of Micah, is a very wonderful prophecy about Jesus Christ—He is in the middle of all of the restoration. Tremendous!!!

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah—

- beginning his work in 755 BC when Jotham was king and continuing through the reign of Ahaz (743-727) and long into the reign of Hezekiah (727-699)—probably until about 703 BC.
- Micah's book is basically a compilation of the oracles he gave over the course of his ministry in a somewhat chronological fashion...
 - For example, the first of the three cycles was written before the fall of Samaria in 721 BC and the second cycle appears to have been written after 721.

Since Micah has the three cycles, we will look at each cycle, and, as is our way in this series, at what lessons the LORD has for us as God's people today...

- the main lesson being what I already mentioned,
 - that even though God's people are full of sin and He punishes them severely, He will restore them—and Christ is at the centre of their restoration.

I. The first cycle of prophecy is found in the first two chapters of Micah.

A. The first thing we learn is that the LORD does not hesitate to punish His people.

- This is true in every age—if He did not punish us, we would completely depart from Him. He punishes us to correct us.
- 1. In verses 2-7 where the prophecy begins, the LORD calls all peoples to see that He comes from His holy temple to judge both Samaria and Jerusalem.
 - You know that Israel was divided in the days of Solomon's son and there was the northern kingdom with its capital city of Samaria and the southern kingdom with its capital at Jerusalem.
 - The LORD speaks of melting down mountains and splitting valleys (v. 4)...of beating their carved images to pieces (v. 7)... of reducing Samaria to a heap of ruins in the field (v. 6)...
 - a reference to the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria in 721 BC.

2. This is no mere slap on the wrist... a great lamentation is made by Micah in verse 8-16 to bring us into the seriousness of the punishment... verse 8 begins:
 - **Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches, 9 for her wounds are incurable. For it has come to Judah; it has come to the gate of My people—to Jerusalem.**
 - This shows that not only Samaria, but also almost all of Judah—right up to the gates of Jerusalem, will be destroyed.
 - The Assyrians took Samaria in 721 BC and went right up to the gates of Jerusalem where they were miraculously stopped in 701 BC.
 - The prophet uses a series of word plays to describe the ruin of their cities:
 - starting in v. 6 with Beth Aphrah (which means ‘house of dust’) saying that they will “roll in the dust...”
 - v. 7 with Shaphir (which means ‘beautiful’) being found in naked shame...
 - and Zaanan (which means “go out”) being told that they will not go out—a reference to being under siege...
 - and so on... the lamentation climaxing with verse 16 telling them that their children will go into captivity: **Make yourself bald and cut off your hair, because of your precious children; enlarge your baldness like an eagle, for they shall go from you into captivity.**
 - As you can see, these are no light judgments—
3. In chapter 2, Micah explains that they will get just what they deserve...
 - a. In 2:1-5, he speaks of how covetous persons wickedly sought ways to expand their property. Sound familiar?
 - God had established an economy where every family was given land by Him so that each could support themselves... but wicked men were always trying to expand their property boundaries.
 - The punishment will be that God will deliver the land of His people to their enemies and then there will no boundaries to set!
 - That is what the LORD does—He gives us a taste of our own medicine to chasten us.
 - b. In 2:6-11, he speaks of how they rejected the true prophecies that Micah gave... and accused him of being a prattler...(v. 6), they tell him to be quiet.
 - What do you suppose God will do to those who do not listen to His word?
 - He raises up false prophets who tell them lies—and they believe the lies.
 - Verse 11 says: **If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,’ even he would be the prattler of this people.**
 - This is just what we are experiencing in the church in North America today.
 - God’s message is confused—there are different people saying different things and calling it the word of God, and God has sent blindness.
 - Someone like Joel Osteen comes along with prophecies of wine and drink (prosperity), and people think it to be the word of God.
 - One of the worst punishments is to have God’s message confused.

- c. And verses 8-10 speak of how their communities become dangerous places to live... people are looking to take the clothes off your back if they can...
 - women are driven from their own homes—
 - When God blesses us, we have safe communities where love abounds.
- B. But this first cycle of prophecy, like all the others, ends on a good note: with a promise of restoration.
1. The LORD promises that He will not leave His people scattered.
 - The Assyrians are the ones who scattered Samaria and Jerusalem, carrying off the people as captives...
 - But look what God promises in Mic 2:12-13: **I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of so many people. ¹³ The one who breaks open will come up before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their king will pass before them, with the LORD at their head.**
 - This probably refers to what happened when Assyria tried to conquer Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day—in 701 BC, Assyria surrounded Jerusalem with great confidence, but God sent death among their camp of the Assyrians so that Jerusalem King Hezekiah was able to emerge from the city, with the LORD at their head.
 - A remnant from the ruins of Israel (Samaria) was then able to come to Jerusalem and assemble with them as God's people.
 - In any case, it is the promise of restoration, of bringing those scattered by God's punishment back together again under the Lord.
 2. God does that to His church today...
 - We are scattered, heresy and division arise, enemies take over—but we also see the mercy of God in bringing people back to the truth.
 - It is only here and there at present, but we look for greater things from the good hand of our LORD Jesus Christ.

TRANS> And that brings us to the second cycle of prophecies where Micah shows us that it is Christ who graciously restores us.

II. The second cycle of Micah's prophecy is found in chapters 3 through 5.

- This prophecy seems to have been given after the fall of Samaria (721 BC), but before the Assyrians' invasion of Judah and attempt on Jerusalem in 701 BC.
- A. This second section begins with an address to the wicked leaders of God's people, both in the church and in the civil realm.
1. Very strong language is used against them.
 - In 3:1, it says that it was for them (as leaders) to know justice...but instead they hate good and love evil.
 - They are presented as cannibals who use their God-given position of leadership to eat God's people... chanting "peace to them (v. 5) while they chew up their flesh.
 - The lesson here for us is clear—in God's kingdom, leaders are given authority not to be used for their own selfish benefit at the expense of the people, but for serving, as Christ did.

2. Micah informs us (in verse 8) that he is full of the power by the Spirit of the LORD to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.
 - God uses His word preached by the power of the Spirit to convict us of our sins so that we will repent... like Nineveh did when Jonah preached to them.
 - But Micah tells Israel and Judah that they will not repent, and all the while they are claiming and presuming falsely that God will protect them from harm...
 - Micah 3:11 says: **Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us."**
 - We should not say (as we so often do) that God will protect us when we are living in way that ought to bring down his punishment!
 - In verse 12, Micah says: **Therefore because of you [leaders] Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.**
 - When the leadership is so corrupt, it shows that the people themselves are corrupt through and through—God is even going to destroy the temple!
 - He spared Jerusalem when the Assyrians invaded in 701, but He will not spare them when Babylon comes in the following century.
3. The destruction of the temple was a shocking prophecy for them to hear!
 - As we have seen in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the people refused to believe that this could ever happen—after all, they were God’s people!

TRANS> But Micah describes all this to prepare the way for the announcement of the greatest deliverance... a deliverance that supersedes the temple—the deliverance that comes by Jesus Christ.

- B. In a marvellous way, Micah declares Jesus, the Messiah who is to come.
- Keep in mind that he wrote this a full 700 years before Jesus came.
1. In Micah 4:1, he speaks of what he calls the latter days, when the nations of the whole world will flow to the LORD.
 - a. First, that they will come to learn of Him and to serve Him
 - Let me read to you of this wonderful blessing beginning in Micah 4:1: **Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. ² Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**
 - Isn’t that amazing—this is what happened after Jesus came when people who had nothing to do with the LORD began to come from the nations to be His disciples. The church has expanded into all the world.
 - b. And look, they will be united in peace...
 - Micah continues in verse 3: **He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares,**

and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

- How remarkable! Those who come to Christ are united in Him and stop fighting with each other. Their weapons are turned into garden tools. This, perhaps, speaks of what has already happened among believers who were once enemies but are now united in Christ...
 - But it seems to speak of an even greater blessing that is yet to come in the world when war will become a thing of the past.
 - Perhaps it refers to the new heaven and the new earth, or perhaps it refers to a time of great blessing that will actually come about in this present age.
 - Micah goes on in verse 4 & 5: **But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make *them* afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. ⁵ For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.**
 - This makes it clear that there will be peace at home as well as among nations... no more of that exploitation and division described before.
 - This is what we have to look forward to in Christ—forever and ever.
 - c. Mic 4:6-8 testifies that the restoration will be so complete that even the lame and the outcast will enjoy the dominion that Israel once had...
2. But then the prophecy takes a shift to present realities...in Micah 4:9.
- a. How could this wonderful state of affairs possibly be the destiny of the people who were described in chapter 3 with their corrupt leaders and their destroyed temple?
 - Right now, far from enjoying these blessings, they are crying aloud in pain... Mic 4:9: **Now why do you cry aloud? *Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor. ¹⁰ Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city, you shall dwell in the field, and to Babylon you shall go. There you shall be delivered; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.***
 - b. They must first go to Babylon—these are the labour pains they must endure.
 - To the onlookers, it will seem as if God has rejected them... the little nations around them will gloat, not knowing the purpose of God for them...
 - Micah 4:11-12 describe of this: **Now also many nations have gathered against you, who say, “Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.” ¹² But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, nor do they understand His counsel; for He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor.**
 - What a great lesson for us to remember when the church is a state of reproach today—the onlookers don’t know the thoughts of the LORD or understand His counsel!
 - They don’t know that He has great plans for us.
 - c. God tells His people to arise and thresh in 4:13, yet He tells them in 5:1 that their ruler will be struck on the cheek with rod—
 - delivered into the power of his enemies.

- Not only would their king be taken into captivity by Babylon, but even after that the LORD Messiah will be struck on the cheek with rod—
- He will be brought into the hands of His enemies.

C. But now we have one of the greatest prophecies of Christ in the whole Bible.

1. In Mic 5:2, it speaks of how a great One will arise from little obscure Bethlehem, where King David was born.
 - a. He is born in obscurity, yet He is from everlasting.
 - It says His goings forth are from of old... even from everlasting—He is a being that has existed from eternity, yet is born in the city of Bethlehem!
 - Let me read it to you... Micah 5:2: **But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.**
 - This speaks of His divinity joined to His humanity...
 - b. In Verse 3 it speaks of the people being given up to trouble until He is born:
 - **Micah 5:3-5: Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel. 4 And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth; 5 and this One shall be peace.**
 - c. He is the one who will be great to the ends of the earth.
 - He is the one who brings peace to the whole world.
 - When He comes, the wonderful blessing we read about in chapter 4 begins with the nations coming to Jerusalem to learn of Him.
 - He will be the peace that unites Jew and Gentile—a remarkable occurrence that is stressed in the New Testament.
- But let no one suppose that this is going to happen all at once.
2. Micah makes it clear that the people must go through many hardships to purge them and prepare them for the Messiah to come.
 - The rest of chapter 5 describes this.
 - a. Micah makes it clear that the Assyrians will still invade all the way up to the gates of Jerusalem where they will be stopped... the 701 event:
 - **Mic 5:5-6: When the Assyrian comes into our land, and when he treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princely men. 6 They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he comes into our land and when he treads within our borders.**
 - b. And that after that, there will still be a great scattering of Israel among the nations where Israel will be among them as a blessing and curse...
 - Verse 7 describes them as everywhere present among the nations like dew that waters (v. 7), but also like the lion that tears its prey (v. 8).
 - c. He describes in ver 10-14 how the things they trust in (instead of the Lord) will be destroyed: their horses and chariots (v. 10), their cities and fortresses (v. 11), their sorceries (v. 12), their carved images (v. 13), and their wooden images (v. 14).

- God will strip them of all this because the blessing of the Messiah will not be through these things, but through the spread of the gospel of grace that will transform (rather than defeat) the nations.
- d. God will also take vengeance on the nations that have not heard (v. 15)...
- All this will be done to prepare the world for the blessing of the Messiah, the One born of woman whose goings forth have been from everlasting and who brings peace to the nations... even the peace described in chapter 4.
 - Praise the LORD!
- 3. What grand things are revealed to us about our Saviour here!
 - Both His person and His work...
 - His person as the eternal Son of God who is born in Bethlehem, and His work as the one who brings peace on earth and unites all men under Him as faithful servants to God in a new heaven and new earth.
 - All of you, take fresh courage and hope as you consider what a perfect Saviour He is—from Bethlehem!—that One whose goings forth are from everlasting.

TRANS> And now on to the third cycle of Micah's prophecy.

III. The third cycle is found in the last two chapters of Micah, chapter 6-7.

- A. Once again, this cycle opens with court proceedings—the LORD calling the mountains and hills to hear His complaint against His people.
 - 1. He begins in 6:3 by asking what He has done to them that they have rejected Him?
 - Was it for bringing them out of Egypt (4)?
 - Or for protecting them in the wilderness from Balak, king of Moab?
 - Or for bringing them across the Jordan River to obtain the land—as ver. 5 says, from Acacia Grove (last encampment east of the Jordan) to Gilgal (west of the Jordan)?
 - What grounds do they have to rebel against God?
 - 2. But does God require of them? Is it some strange requirement?
 - Micah 6:6-7 asks: **With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**
 - Is this primarily what God is after from us? Lots of offerings?
 - That is what people seemed to think in Micah's day and what many think He is after today... but no... this is not what God has emphasised.
 - Mic 6:8 reminds us: **He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?**
 - In short, He wants us to love Him as our God and to be gracious to each other. He calls us to do what is right (to do justly), to love mercy (to love His covenant mercy that saves us), and to walk humbly—as if He is LORD instead of us.

- Nothing complicated here—simply that we return to Him as our God, trusting in His covenant promise to receive us through Christ our Mediator.
- 3. But there is no such return to God among His people...
 - a. Micah 6:9-16 speaks of how they are such persons as God must punish.
 - For instance, in verse 11, He says, **shall I count pure those with the wicked scales, and with the bag of deceitful weights?**
 - Are those persons who have come to God to be his people?
 - Those who lie and cheat their neighbours?
 - The LORD has no choice but to punish such persons—to make them sick (v. 13) by striking them and desolate because of their sins.
 - To have them sow but not reap—not be able to enjoy the fruits of their labours...
 - Yes, these are people who claim to be God’s own people,
 - but they still follow (v. 16) the statutes of Omri—the wicked royal family in Israel that God had to judge for introducing idolatrous worship.
 - b. Micah describes his own frustration with the people as a prophet to them in chapter 7...
 - As he ministers the word, he looks for fruit, but there is none there...
 - Mic 7:1: **Woe is me! for I am like those who gather summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes; there is no cluster to eat of the first-ripe fruit which my soul desires.**
 - In verse 2 he even says: **the faithful man has perished and there is no one upright among men.**
 - As it says in Romans, there is none righteous, no not one.
 - In 7:3, Micah describes them as those do evil with both hands.
 - The best of them are like briars (v. 4)—
 - A man even finds enemies within his own household as it says in verse 6-7—which is quoted by Jesus:
 - **For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own household. 7 Therefore I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.**
 - This is not acceptable for those who profess to be God’s people!

TRANS> We learn from this that we are not worthy of God’s acceptance.

- That is why we need a Saviour who is from everlasting to come among us.

B. In Micah 7:8-13, Micah affirms that even though he and his people are ripe for judgment, God will still raise them up again.

- In verse 8, he speaks to the onlookers and says: **Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.**
 - Dear Christian people, do you see the church weak and beat down, the tail and not the head? a reproach among the nations?
 - Surely you do—but this is not the end—God will raise us up.

- We can say as verse 9: **“I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness.”**
 - We are low because of our sins... but He will establish us in justice and in light and in righteousness.
 - That is our hope when our enemies prevail—the LORD has sent them because of our sins—but they will not always prevail.
- Verses 11-13 describe how God will make us (His people) like a sheepfold with walls to which the nations will come to be saved...
 - Mic 7:11-13: ***In the day when your walls are to be built, in that day the decree shall go far and wide. 12 In that day they shall come to you from Assyria and the fortified cities, from the fortress to the River, from sea to sea, and mountain to mountain.***
- But before that happens, we will still be lowly and despised...
 - Verse 13 says: **Yet the land shall be desolate because of those who dwell in it, and for the fruit of their deeds.**
 - This is what saw in the second cycle of Micah... that the LORD will not give us the things we trust in but will humble us so that we will trust in Him.
 - So often when we prosper, God must take away our prosperity...
 - but all the while we still have the gospel and people still come among us to learn of Christ and be saved.
 - As Paul said, we poor, but we make many rich.

C. So Micah, full of faith, concludes with prayer...

1. In Mic 7:14-15, he asks the LORD to shepherd His people as He did when He brought them out of Egypt...
2. And in verse 16-17, he speaks with certainty that the day will come when the nations will see that God is indeed going to bless us:
 - **Mic 7:16-17: The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put their hand over their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. 17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of You.**
 - Isn't this so very relevant to us?
 - The nations see the church with all her failings, weakened under the chastening hand of God—but all along we know and are sure that the day will come when they will see His hand upon us to deliver us again!
- God will do this and Micah knows this, so...
3. He concludes his prayer with praise to God for being a God who forgives and restores.
 - Should this prayer of praise and thanks to God not be our prayer also?
 - Mic 7:18-20—very beautiful: **Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.**
 - What a marvellous thing—*He delights in mercy*—
 - Do you know Him in this way—the One who sent His Son to Bethlehem that He might die on the cross for us?

- Verse 19 continues: **He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.**
 - He has His way of burying our sins—or blotting them out—of removing them from the record through Christ.
 - Child of God, praise the LORD who has fully pardoned you!
 - All your sins are cast into the depths of the sea.
- And then verse 20: **You will give truth to Jacob *And* mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.”**
 - Ah yes—the mercy promised to Abraham 2000 years before Christ for his descendants and for the whole world is provided.
 - God’s promised grace is fulfilled.

Conclusion:

What a beautiful and encouraging book Micah is...

- It faces the hard realities of our sin—
 - God’s punishment of that sin that makes us weak and despised in the world, even at the present time...
- But Micah continually flows from sin and punishment to blessing in Christ...
 - Christ is in the middle of it all—the one born in Bethlehem who was from everlasting and who brings us peace, restoring all things, as promised to Abraham.

Let us join with Micah in praising our God in hope for His great mercy.

- We live in this day when so much of His plan has unfolded,
 - but still, we are despised in the world for our own good until He brings the full blessing that He has promised in His time.
- It will surely come because God is our God and there is none like Him:
 - **Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?**