

*Sermon on Micah prepared by Jonathan Shradar*

*YouVersion events / Stand if able for the reading of the word*

**God rescues his own, motivating a life of love and obedience.**

**Micah 1:1–7** “The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

- [2] Hear, you peoples, all of you;  
    pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it,  
and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you,  
    the Lord from his holy temple.
- [3] For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place,  
    and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth.
- [4] And the mountains will melt under him,  
    and the valleys will split open,  
like wax before the fire,  
    like waters poured down a steep place.
- [5] All this is for the transgression of Jacob  
    and for the sins of the house of Israel.  
What is the transgression of Jacob?  
    Is it not Samaria?  
And what is the high place of Judah?  
    Is it not Jerusalem?
- [6] Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country,  
    a place for planting vineyards,  
and I will pour down her stones into the valley  
    and uncover her foundations.
- [7] All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces,  
    all her wages shall be burned with fire,  
    and all her idols I will lay waste,  
for from the fee of a prostitute she gathered them,  
    and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return.” (ESV)

**God rescues his own, motivating a life of love and obedience.**

I have reached the stage of parenting when your kids begin to call you out for not living by your own standard. I say they can't play or watch shows on a device while scrolling through twitter on my phone. I tell them to clean up their rooms and have pride of place, and the weeds take over my yard!

Studying Micah this week nudged me to realize how easy it is to live a "do as I say not as I do" life. How we can prefer impossible standards for other people but not ourselves. We expect everyone else to match expectations but it is as if certain things don't apply to us. Frankly, if we are in charge that's how it should be!

And we learn to deflect quickly when called out... "what about so and so... they are far worse."

That is how it was with God's people in the Minor Prophets - they live assuming upon the covenant (a relationship with God, his claim over them) and led to neglect and even abuse of his commands. Like the rules no longer applied.

And here in the fourth of the great writing prophets, Micah brings another moment of judgment on both Israel and Judah before their exile. Before they would be displaced, experiencing the ramifications of their sin.

The backstory is that God had a special people, his own, those he would bless to bless others. They were supposed to be different, set apart from everyone else so that you could notice it was the God they worshiped that made them different.

Those people lived through a lot of difficulty, usually brought about by their own bad decisions or forgetfulness. They would become slaves to Egypt but grow into a large number. Eventually, God rescued them from captivity and they made their way to the land he promised to give them, where they could live their set apart existence.

The journey was long, it took a generation, still because of their bad decisions and forgetfulness. But they made it into the land. And they began to thrive. Twelve tribes spread across the land making up a nation of God's people. Living under the promise of his care for them and a covenant to live differently because they had been rescued.

But eventually, they forgot again and made bad decisions. The nation split in two and with each passing generation, they became more like every other nation.

God then sent prophets, those that would speak to the people for him, to call them back to the different life, back to him as their God. Micah is one of these prophets and God uses his voice to put Samaria and Jerusalem (the capitals of the two nations) on trial for their bad decisions and forgetfulness. And mixed in with the words of judgment there was a promise of a better future under the rule of the true King.

### **God rescues his own, motivating a life of love and obedience.**

This is what we see of God in Micah.

### **God deals with sin.**

Micah is mostly a metaphorical trial, where Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah) are confronted by God for their sin, missing the mark of his way of life, and disobedience. They didn't meet his standard for them.

The problems are the same as the usual in the Minor Prophets. Micah is ministering at the same time as Hosea and Isaiah so the themes are the same. The people have rejected God's way and stumbled into idolatry, the worship of other things, even other fake gods. And while they are doing that, they are oppressing the poor, taking advantage of people "beneath" them and sowing injustice in the land.

The nations struggle because there are no righteous rulers among them, and no righteous priests or prophets.

**Micah 3:11–12** "Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." [12] Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height." (ESV)

They are all sell-outs. They are corrupt, they tell you what you want to hear if you pay them enough, and they presume upon their identity as God's people. Using their history as a get-out-jail-free card, or rather a get-out-of-responsibility card.

They are following the wicked desires of their flesh over the righteous commands of God. And it's not like these commands were awful. Treat people well and fairly, even if they don't look like you. Honor parents, marriages, don't kill people. Worship only Yahweh/God. Abstain from things that are unclean. And forgive everyone's debt every fifty years!

Instead, they lie, cheat, and steal.

**Micah 2:1–3** “Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. [2] They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. [3] Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster.” (ESV)

God will deal with their sin. There are consequences. Though things seem great at the moment, judgment is coming.

All of this will lead to exile - to an end of their abuses and the sully of God's name.

God deals with sin by discipline, a deserved displacement.

But as he announces judgment and punishment, he also says that it is the place of restoration.

**God rescues his people in the thick of it.**

In the thick of life, its hardships, its hurts; in the middle of uncertainty, of exile. And the trial for sin becomes a promise meant to give those true to God hope.

**Micah 4:1–5** “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it

shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, [2] and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem [3] He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and 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 anymore; [4] but they shall sit every man 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 the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever." (ESV)

He gives them a glimpse of the salvation to come and makes a promise to redeem.

**Micah 4:10** "Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies." (ESV)

This is huge. Your exile will be the place of rescue, of redemption. The claiming of your worth and keeping you.

When things don't feel right, when it seems like we don't belong, that is where God works. To rescue. To redeem. This promise was spoken to bring the people back, to turn to God again, to live differently.

"While God is a righteous judge who carries out deserved judgment, he is also a merciful Savior who gives undeserved grace and full forgiveness to those who turn to him in repentance."

Historically, exile was a pivotal moment for both Israel and Judah, it would be the end of idolatry - they stop the worship of fake gods. But even in returning to the land there is still the ache of exile... things aren't exactly right.

There is a longing for more - and Micah leads them to look forward to a Savior-King that will bring final rescue and redemption.

**Micah 5:1–5** “Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. [2] But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. [3] Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. [4] And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. [5] And he shall be their peace.”(ESV)

To a people living in disobedience and sin comes this wonderful promise of Jesus who truly works rescue and redemption. In the long arc of history, exile will come, you will be rescued in the midst of it by a God who loves you, even when you turned your back on him. And the ultimate rescue comes with a new King. Jesus the promised One. A King not just for Israel or Judah, but for everyone.

A redemption that removes the burden of the law, and frees his people to live differently because they have been made new.

**Colossians 2:13–14** “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” (ESV)

**Titus 2:11–14** “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (ESV)

The Kingdom’s arrival had brought to bear the promise of Micah.

"Micah offers ultimate hope to a people deserving judgment because of God's promises of steadfast love and compassion. We now understand that a holy God can pardon and pass over the transgression of those who put their faith in him only because those sins were put upon Christ (Rom. 3:24-26). God's wrath

against the sin of those who belong to him was exhausted as the cross. Just as decisively as he dealt with the Egyptian army (in the first rescue), so has God dealt with the sins of his people, through Christ (in the final rescue) (Rom. 8:1-4)." GTB

Wherever you are, in the thick of it, he rescues and redeems. You are never too far from home for the saving work of Jesus.

**Micah 7:7** "But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." (ESV)

"Though we may suffer and fall in our life's battle with evil, we shall rise, as the prophet believed he himself would, due to the Lord's vindication (7:8-9) - and, as indeed will all those who are united to Christ by faith (Rom. 6:5). This is the wonder of the gospel in Micah."

There is more! From redemption, he elevates his people.

**God calls us to life in him.**

This is what he desired for the people all along. Surrender to his way, to his provision, to his purpose.

From the basis of promise, from the experience of redemption the prophet asks "what now?"

With this homecoming for his people, God doesn't need the performance of religious rituals, he wants his people to live the beautiful life of his way.

**Micah 6:6–8** "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? [7] Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" [8] He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (ESV)

Justice, kindness, and humility before God. It is so simple, and at the same time can feel so hard. This is the kingdom ethic. But the grace is that God gives us what he requires. We need the power to live this beautiful life and Jesus gives it to us. The good news is that Jesus fulfilled God's righteous standard on behalf of his people!

**1 Thessalonians 5:23–24** “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” (ESV)

“They who are saved by mercy have that very righteousness that the law demands. In Christ they have paid the penalty of their disobedience, and in Christ they have yielded obedience to every precept of the law.’ In other words, through our union with Jesus, and by the power of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, we too can act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.” Robert Haldane

Now we rest in the all-sufficient sacrifice of God's own Son. And we live the life he has called us to. A life that will seem radical to many, that places confidence in Christ and is not swayed by the winds of the moment, that sacrifices what we prefer but what we want to keep for the good of our neighbors, those in need of justice and kindness. It will take all of who we are, this is no hobby, this is life in Christ. And we seek him for help in it.

“Grant what You command, and command what You do desire.” Augustine

### **God rescues his own, motivating a life of love and obedience.**

He has come in the midst of it all - he met the discipline we deserve, and rescued and redeemed us. This is Jesus as the better father than I, saying “do as I say because I have done.”

Friends, in Jesus you are freed to obey. Not to earn, but because we are transformed by his rescue. Micah says that God will show marvelous things - and we may be the things he shows... wretches redeemed. Given life. Doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God.



**Micah 7:18–19** “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. [19] He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (ESV)

His be the Victor’s Name  
Who fought the fight alone;  
Triumphant saints no honor claim;  
Their conquest was His own.

By weakness and defeat  
He won the glorious crown;  
Trod all His foes beneath His feet  
By being trodden down.

What though the vile accuser roar  
Of sins that I have done;  
I know them well, and thousands more;  
My God, He knoweth none

He hell in hell laid low;  
Made sin, He sin o’erthrew;  
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,  
And death, by dying, slew.

Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,  
Slain by divine decree!  
Who lived, who died, who lives again,  
For thee, my soul, for thee.

My sin is cast into the sea  
Of God’s forgotten memory  
No more to haunt accusingly  
For Christ has lived and died for me  
*That now I would live for his glory...*

The standard has been met for us so we can now live it as the way of the kingdom  
- right in the middle of life - in the thick of it. May it be so with us.