

## ***Micah 4/4: 7:1-20***

### ***Preface:***

Well, friends, it's our last time in Micah. Next week we'll move on through the Minor Prophets into our first and only week talking about Nahum.

I want us to end Micah today really well. What we'll see is just how much Micah, in the last analysis, sees God and what it means to live for God in a really similar way to how we do. That said, I think we'll be challenged a little to consider some of the basics about God and ourselves.

Let's pray!

### ***Prayer:***

#### ***7:7-20: Hope:***

Back in Chapter 5, when Micah talked about Hope, he spoke to a time when Israel's leadership would be restored, and an especially set-apart ruler would reestablish God's People's place and role in the world. To read it was to read something that felt like prophecy, felt like a description of what was to come.

The hope of Chapter Seven, though, reads like worship:

***7 But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord,  
I wait for God my Savior;  
my God will hear me.***

***8 Do not gloat over me, my enemy!  
Though I have fallen, I will rise.***

***Though I sit in darkness,  
the Lord will be my light.***

***9 Because I have sinned against him,  
I will bear the Lord's wrath,  
until he pleads my case  
and upholds my cause.***

***He will bring me out into the light;  
I will see his righteousness.***

We read at the end of the Chapter:

***18 Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the  
transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?***

***You do not stay angry forever  
but delight to show mercy.***

***19 You will again have compassion on us;***

***you will tread our sins underfoot  
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of  
the sea.***

***20 You will be faithful to Jacob,  
and show love to Abraham,  
as you pledged on oath to our ancestors  
in days long ago.***

These could be Psalms, you know? This is worship.

And like any Psalm that describes the vindication the Psalmist feels, Micah describes the state of Israel's enemies, too: vv10-12, 16-17 are focused on the regret, the shame, the realization that the enemies of God's People will feel when God comes through for them.

But I want us to linger in the hope that Micah shows:

### ***Lingering In Hope:***

***“As for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait  
for God my Savior; my God will hear  
me...Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I  
sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.  
Because I have sinned against him, I will bear***

***the Lord's wrath, until he pleads my case and upholds my cause. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness."***

Micah gives voice to an incredibly sophisticated, trusting, intimate understanding of who God is and what God does. He goes back and forth between "I" and the "Lord," contrasting his state and what he knows God will do, because God is who God is: righteous, faithful to the covenant promises, the marriage vows, he's made to His People. Micah is not God, and he recognizes it.

Micah talks about God's "wrath" in a way that is shockingly similar to the way Paul does in Romans, a sort of allowing people to receive what they've sown. And he talks about the heart of God, and God's intentions to see his purposes for Israel through, in a way that sounds like it was taken from a Christmas song in Matthew or Luke:

***18 Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the  
transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?  
You do not stay angry forever***

***but delight to show mercy.***

***19 You will again have compassion on us;  
you will tread our sins underfoot  
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of  
the sea.***

***20 You will be faithful to Jacob,  
and show love to Abraham,  
as you pledged on oath to our ancestors  
in days long ago.***

We believe, fundamentally, that in Jesus God has tread our sins underfoot, has hurled our iniquities into the depths of the sea. We trust that God is a God who “pardons sins and forgives... transgressions.” There’s something about Micah’s sensibilities that are just so true to our experience of following God on this side of the “Ruler from Bethlehem” that Micah trusted would come.

Micah’s view of God--as one who will care for His People, who will save them from themselves and their sin, and make good on His Promises--is important, because we tend to think that there is just an enormous chasm between God as Jesus revealed God to be, and God as the Old Testament makes God out to be.

But to think this way is to completely reject and neglect the psalms; it's to look past the prophets like Micah who had the closest relationships with God that anyone could have, and spoke to God's sustaining, providing, and caring character.

### ***Reasons: 6:9-16***

And the reason that Micah has to talk about God's forgiving nature so much isn't because he himself is just so wracked with a feeling of guilt, or because God has convicted him of his own failures. It's because Micah is a part of Israel, a member of God's People, and they...well, they've blown it, right? That's what Chapter six is about, the first part of Chapter 7 that was read to us. We've seen it in Chapters 1, 2, 3. Israel has just lost their way.

And what's so amazing, and Micah makes it clear earlier in Chapter Six, is just how basic the things God asks of his people are.

Micah says this:

### ***What God Asks: 6:6-8***

**6 With what shall I come before the Lord  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
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 thousand rivers of olive oil?**

**Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**

**8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?**

**To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly[a] with your God.**

Again:

**8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?**

**To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly[a] with your God.**

And certain strains of Christianity are quick to point out, “Hey, that’s not enough, you know. We need to make sure to bring Jesus into play here. God may want this, but he also wants us to confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior, so don’t forget that.” That’s fine. I get the

urge.

But Micah is communicating to God's People, to insiders who have at least the chance to understand that they are God's People, and were blessed with a relationship with God so that they might bring blessing wherever they went, just because they were who they were.

***What God Asks:***

***At Best, At Worst:***

Instead they've been, at best misguided, replacing a holy way of living for rote ceremony or at worst, you know, "offering their firstborn for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul," taking part in the sin of Ahab, killing their children instead of trusting God.

***8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.***

***And what does the Lord require of you?***

***To act justly and to love mercy***

***and to walk humbly with your God.***

***Alignment:***

What we realize is that Micah not only had a really, really good understanding of who God was; as good an



understanding as anyone in Israel. It was so good that it seems to just slide into place with what Jesus has revealed to us about God's character.

But Micah also had a really, really good understanding of what God wanted from His People, who were meant to be model people for all humanity. It was so good that it seems to just slide into place with what Jesus has revealed to us about what it means to live faithfully.

### ***“Act Justly”***

We can talk of acting justly.

To “act justly” means something, you know? And it doesn't mean, most likely, what we think it means. Our ideas of justice are often shaped by the world--which at it's best says, “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth,” and at it's worst says “your whole nation for an eye, you're whole family for a tooth.” And yet we are, at our most basic, people who are undeserving of what we have been given and have been forgiven. We are those who get what we don't deserve, and offer to others what they don't deserve, too.

But “justice” as Micah puts it has nothing to do with

our court system or some worldly sense of retaliation. To act justly is simply to keep your side of the bargain; and for the Israelites Micah is talking to, it means to keep their marriage vows, their covenant vows, that they've made with God. To act justly isn't to sit and reflect on what sort of punishment is the right sort of punishment in this or that situation; it's simply to keep the faith, keep Torah, do what God has asked them to do.

For us, almost 3,000 years removed from Micah's moment in history, to act justly is to do the exact same thing: To be faithful to the relationship that we have with God, one completely enabled by Jesus, empowered by the Spirit. We're still to act justly; not keeping Torah, not following the Law, but living up to this New Covenant Jesus made with us, and doing what Jesus asks His People, His Church, to do.

So we can ask ourselves, "Do I act justly?"

Am I faithful or am I faithless? Or, more importantly, "Where am I trusting Jesus, and where am I not?" Because Micah took it for granted that God would act justly; he fundamentally believed God would keep his promises to Abraham. God would live up to the vows

he made with his people. Jesus will keep his promises to us, too; Jesus will act justly toward us...but if we don't trust Jesus, then how can we be expected to keep our promises to him?

“Do I act justly” ought to invite us to ask if we trust the one who promises to keep his promises to us? Do we trust the character of Christ, who doesn't break his promises to the Church? Or do we not? What in our lives reveals what we believe?

### ***“Love Mercy”***

We can talk of loving mercy.

Micah was a prophet, remember. Much of what he said was warning that what the people were sowing was their own doom. And yet he completely understood that God was a merciful God. God's fundamental character was a compassionate one, and he sought to offer mercy in all its forms to Israel if only they would keep him in mind. And even when they were resolved to reject him completely, God didn't stop working for a way to redeem them.

So we can ask ourselves, “Do I love mercy?”

And all sorts of questions follow us in this:

We can go large: What things do I find unforgivable? What in my own life will I not forgive? Or we can go in other directions: In what ways do I show mercy to the people who fail me? To whom have I shown compassion lately?

Micah, remember, doesn't just want God to forgive Israel; he wants God to restore them to their promised land and their promised blessing. For Micah, God's forgiveness and compassion and mercy mean something; they mean God keeping his promises to them in this most practical way. For us to love mercy means to do something with the mercy, the compassion, that we feel. Love that simply feels isn't love at all; real love is always preformed, shown. Love moves and does. When all we do is feel compassion, we aren't loving it. That said, even feeling compassion in a world as numbing as ours is a special blessing.

***“Walk Humbly (with your God)”***

We can talk of walking humbly.

We know more about God than even Micah knew; we have more access to God than Micah had. And it's not

because we're extra-special; it's because God is who Micah knew him to be: A promise-keeper, who forgives people, who shows mercy, who is long-suffering--patient--because that's what it means to be God. Micah knew he needed God to plead his case, uphold his cause, bring him into the light, reveal God's own faithfulness to his promises, because Micah knew that he wasn't God. He didn't have the authority or the power to forgive himself, redeem himself, save himself, or restore his people.

Micah walked humbly with God. He recognized his limits, as a created person; he recognized his people's limits, as sinners, and humanity's limits, as those who didn't understand Yahweh's plans to use Israel to redeem all creation, save them all.

So we can ask ourselves:

“Am I walking humbly with our God?”

Micah is talking about more than simply expressing humility here. And he has to, because humility isn't thinking small thoughts about ourselves; humility is recognizing our place in the universe, and you can't do that unless you're “walking with God.” To be a

Christian is to recognize that we follow Jesus, are led by the Spirit--that we're walkers, we're movers who move in the direction God goes. But real humility recognizes that we're created; it recognizes that we didn't create ourselves, and walking humbly with our God recognizes that we have been created for God's glory and our neighbors good; tossed like salt into the world to season and preserve it, even as this path we walk by faith brings us privilege after privilege. And, while we may not always know where our faithfulness will take us, what place or situation we'll arrive at as we walk with God, we do know who we're walking with: someone more just, humble, and merciful than we are.

### ***Conclusion:***

Micah reminded God's People that they existed to act, to love, to walk; to be on the move. And their movement was meant to be in a specific direction, toward specific ends. They were to act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with their God. We're still called to this.

Do I act justly? Do I show mercy? Do I walk humbly?

We know more than they knew about God, certainly,

and while are sins aren't the same, we still fail, as God's People, all the time. Less and less and less over time, I hope. Whatever failures and sins and mess get in our way, though, God is always ready to offer us the same thing he asks of us.

God is always ready to keep the promises Jesus made to us, always ready to show us the compassion we need, and always walking alongside us.

If we don't experience these things as true, then there are things to consider. We may not be paying attention. We may be resisting God. We may be in the wrong somehow. Or...it's winter, and the days are short, and Ohio is gray, and our lives are full, and we simply need to figure out a way to invite God more completely into whatever space we can muster.

Because God wants us to experience His love, so that, even though we sing it 3,000 years later with far more insight into how God keeps promises than Micah could have imagined, we can sing with Micah:

***18 Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the  
transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?***

***You do not stay angry forever  
but delight to show mercy.***

***19 You will again have compassion on us;  
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