**Micah Sermon: With What Shall I Come Before the Lord?**

Micah 1:14 Micah from Moresheth Gath, 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Micah from the countryside. Younger contemporary of Isaiah, but not a courtier like Isaiah. More a prophet of the people than Isaiah. Isaiah: national issues. Micah: regular folks, personal worship and social morality.

Mentioned in Jeremiah as a bold prophet, speaking truth to power. Jeremiah 26:18

(He actually quotes Micah 3:12)

Micah 1:1 During the reigns of Jotham (742-735), Ahaz (735-715) and Hezekiah (715-687)

 About 740-710 BC. Both before and after destruction of Samaria (722 BC). Much abuse of the poor by the rich. Judges accepting bribes. The wealthy think their wealth and power will protect them from danger. (Micah 3:11).

Themes in Micah:

1. Those who live luxurious lives and seek to placate God through being religious or offering money are an abomination in the sight of God—sucking the life out of the poor.

Micah has scathing attacks against those who use their wealth and power to placate God and abuse the poor.

2. Hope for salvation: A new Jerusalem and a new king—the Messiah!

Ch 1-3 Judgment is coming.

Ch 1 Judgment on Judah and Samaria. (especially Samaria in Ch 1)

Micah 1:2-7

v. 3 This is the Day of the Lord. Look! The Lord is coming from his dwelling place to Jerusalem and Samaria. Great news, right? No! God is coming to exercise judgment on Samaria.

1:4-7 Samaria will be a heap of ruins…

Why? Because of idolatry Micah 1:5 Jacob’s (the Northern Kingdom) transgression is Samaria. Jerusalem is Judah’s “high place.”

v. 6 Samaria’s stones will be rolled into the valley. (This happened in 722 BC when Assyrian King Shalmanezer completely destroyed Samaria.

v. 6 a “heap of rubble.”

Our lives, too, will be a “Heap of rubble” if we practice idolatry—putting things of the world before God.

1:7 Idolatry and prostitution in Samaria.

The things we idolize—our jobs, our being in shape, our vacation homes, our four-wheelers, etc. will be a heap of ruins on the Day of the Lord.

v. 7a She gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitution—a reference to prostitution being part of pagan worship.

v. 7b as the wages of prostitutes they will be used again. The Assyrians will take your money and use it in their own worship.

May this never be! Let us not love the things of the world.

Ch 2 More specific about the nature of the sin of Judah and Samaria. This time principally Judah.

Micah 2:1-6

2:2 They covet fields. They steal inheritances. The sin here is the wealthy taking advantage of the small landholders through debts to acquire massive landholdings. This violates the Mosaic covenant, but these people do not care.

They were greedy, materialistic—always wanting more, and not noticing that this always came at the expense of the poor and disadvantaged.

They drove their expensive, fancy cars and wore their designer clothes, but, like the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 did not notice the poor, sick and needy Lazarus.

2:3 You will no longer walk proudly.

His enemies tell him to stop speaking (2:6) “Do not prophesy.” The people are listening to false prophets.

“Disgrace will not overtake us.”

Do not call us out on our materialism and greed.

We have such false prophets today who occupy the pulpits of so many evangelical churches, preaching prosperity gospel and easy believism, when the majority of their congregants are on the wide road to hell.

Micah 3:1,4-6 We need to embrace justice for the poor, the outcast, the lonely old people, the single moms, the immigrant… The prophets declare “peace” for the wealthy, but wage war on the poor. Shameful!

Any parallels today?

Micah 3:9-12 They abhor social justice. v. 11 It is all about money for the leaders, priests and prophets.

3:12 Summary. Zion will be plowed like a field; Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble. (587 BC) This is the passage quoted by Jeremiah.

This is what happens to those who talk a religious game, but do not practice humility and justice.

Micah 4-7 Hope and future glory!

Micah 4:1 In the last days… These are the last days (Hebrews 1:2, Acts 2:16-17)

4:1-5 A prophecy of the Kingdom. Judah to become the spiritual metropolis of the entire world (parallel Is 2:2-4).

v. 2 Many nations

v. 2 Instruction will go out from Zion (Jerusalem). A prophecy about the church/Pentecost.

v. 3 They will beat their swords into plowshares. Peace to be found in the prince of peace. Black will befriend white. Palestinian will befriend Israeli. Russian will befriend Latvian. Progressive will befriend conservative.

Micah 4:5 A memory verse? “All the nations may walk in the name of their gods (money, success, pleasure, video games, sports…), but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.

Get the vision. This is why we are planting Merced and supporting BNMA

Q: What does it mean to you to “walk in the name of the Lord our God?

It means to live a life worthy of him. It means to practice Micah 6:1-8.

Are you “living in the name of the Lord our God”

Micah 5:1-4

5:1 A bad situation, but…Hope for an ungodly world—the Messiah!

5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephthrah,… (The smaller of the two Bethlehems)

Jesus/Messiah will be ruler over the new Israel—the Church!!

Q: Is Jesus your ruler?

5:3 Israel will bear a Son. And his brothers will return to God.

5:4 Messiah will shepherd them.

“His greatness will extend to the ends of the earth!”

Micah 6:1-8

In this chapter God is calling us to do what he does and to feel what he feels. 6:8 God has SHOWN (not told) us what is good. He showed us through Jesus.

v. 1-2 Like a court scene, but God’s witnesses are the mountains and the hills. God is calling Nature as a witness against us! The whole world is watching.

v. 3 The people say God is hard and unmerciful. “God has burdened us.”

Really? I have burdened you?

Have you thought of Christianity as a burden? I have to sacrifice for special missions. Church on Sunday, Bible Talk on Tuesday and midweek on Thursday????

v. 3 How have I wearied you? What did I do wrong that you are bored with me?

v. 4 I saved you from slavery in Egypt. That is what I did.

Remember, you were slaves at one time. You were slaves to sin, but I freed you.

So, what is this “burden” you are talking about?

v. 4b-5 I protected you all the time in the wilderness. (when Balak king of Moab as well as Balaam plotted against you)

God took care of us in our walk as disciples. Not that there were no hardships, but God has ALWAYS been with us.

So, what is God asking of us? If God does not want my religion, what does he want?

 “And what does Jehovah require of you? To act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

Micah 6:6-7 What should I bring?

Burnt offerings (as little as a pigeon that the poor could afford)

A year-old calf (a middle class peasant could afford this)

A thousand rams (a very wealthy person could afford this)

Ten thousand streams of oil no one could afford that!

My firstborn child Heaven forbid!

What can I give to atone for my sin? The implied answer: Nothing!!! God wants our heart, not our money.

So, what can I do?

He wants our hearts. He wants our actions as well. He wants us to be like him!

Act justly. Has to do with social obligation. Treating people the way they ought to be treated. Caring for the poor and the outcast.

To act justly is to work toward a world where things are “right.”

For Micah, it is a world where the rich do not take advantage of the poor, where the non-Israelite is treated with dignity, where women are given respect as equals.

v. 8 (to love mercy) Love kindness (hesed) Show covenant love, loyal love. Kindness, faithfulness to people, compassion. Hesed is a big word. It is Hosea’s favorite word.

We need to create justice, to make things right, but we need to do it with compassion, kindness, a sense of community (covenant-love)

From my paper on this passage: Every engagement we have with one another and with those in the world should be redemptive. We are to be the hands and the feet and the heart of God to our community.

Walk humbly. Do all of this, remembering your place with respect to God. Phil 2:3-4. Consider others better than yourselves. Have the mind of Christ.

Not just a humble attitude, but a humble walk. A humble life. A life that oozes humility for all to see. Hosea 6:6 (Matthew 9:13)

“For I desire mercy (hesed), not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.”

God envisions a society—a church—where theology and ethics are one. (quoting Leslie C. Allen). A people he can call “my people” (Hosea)

Hosea 12:6 an almost identical list.

God contrasts himself with the cruelty and injustice of Judah’s rich. Micah 7:4 “The best of them is as a brier.”

End: Micah 7:18-20. “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. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all or iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be faithful (*hesed*) to Jacob and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.