

Micah: Broken People, Faithful God

Promise of Deliverance

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Micah 2

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There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, the other was poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing but one little you lamb that he had purchased. He raised it and it grew up with his children. It shared his food and it even drank from his cup. He even slept in his arms. It was really like a daughter to him.

Now, a traveler came to the rich man of that town, but the rich man refused to take one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come. Instead, he took the U lamb that belonged to the poor man. He slaughtered it and prepared it for the one who had come to him. Some of you recognize this story as the story that the prophet Nathan shares with King David after he has committed adultery with Bathsheba.

And as David is listening to this story, he asks Nathan, "Who is this rich man because he deserves to die?" And Nathan says, "You are the man." Let me tell you another story. There were two men, a rich king who lived in a large palace and owned many acres of land, and another man who had just one small vineyard which had been in his family for generations.

The king went to that man and asked him for the vineyard so that he could use it for his own personal garden because the location was just outside the castle walls. The man refused because it was all he owned and it was in his family for so long, he couldn't imagine giving it up. And so the king went away sad and angry because he really wanted the vineyard.

His wife discovered what was upsetting the king and she told him not to worry because she would get the vineyard for him. With evil intent, his wife created a plot to have the other man killed so that the king could take possession of his vineyard. She had false accusations made against the man so that he was dragged from the city and stoned to death. Then her husband, the king, took possession of the vineyard.

Some of you may recognize this as the story of what took place between King Ahab, his wife Jezebel, and the man, Naboth. How evil and selfish must somebody be to do something like this? As leaders, these kings were called to set an example for good and not evil. And yet we have story after story of these kings of the Israelite people who were disobeying God and doing whatever they wanted.

This morning, we're going to continue in our series of Micah, and we will see that God sent the prophet Micah to go call out these leaders for their lack of obedience. He was to call out these kings who were not following what God had commanded them to do. And of course, like most people, the kings don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear Micah calling them out for their disobedience.

But Micah reminds them that the leaders will be held responsible for their evil acts. These kings are actually to be held to a higher standard. They are going to be judged. And at the end of chapter two, Micah is going to offer us hope, hope to those who remain faithful even in the midst of bad leadership, that there would be a remnant of Israelite people who would remain true to God.

And so in this next chapter, as well as in chapter three next week, Micah is going to be calling out not just the leaders, but also the false prophets that are prophesying false hope that the leaders are listening to. So if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up to Micah chapter 2 verse 1. Micah chapter 2 verse 1, and we're going to make it through all of chapter 2. It's not that long. Micah, chapter 2, verse 1. And while you are turning there, let me pray.

Heavenly Father, we come before you, recognizing that throughout history, there certainly are times that there are bad leaders, there are corrupt leaders, not just nationally speaking, but sometimes in our businesses, in our places of work, sometimes it's in our own families, and there's struggles that take place. Lord, every single person in here is a leader in one way or another.

And so my prayer is that whatever authority you have given to each person in here, that that authority would be used for your glory and not our own. And Father, if for whatever reason we have become corrupt, we maybe are even blinded to our own selfishness. I pray that you would send a Micah to us to call us out so that we would be obedient to you. And we ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

I hadn't planned that prayer. That's a dangerous prayer, I think. God send us a Micah to call us out if we are not being obedient, but I think it's a good prayer. Here we go. Micah chapter 2, starting in verse 1, Micah says, "Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil in their beds. At morning's light, they carry it out because it is in their power to do it. They covet fields and they seize them and houses and they take them.

They defraud a man of his home, a fellow man of his inheritance. Is it interesting there that in Micah chapter 2 verse 2, he is actually referring back to King Ahab? This idea that kings would cheat people out of their property, out of their homes, instead of protecting them and watching over them. And so we learn the first truth in today's message. And it's a truth that is true in all of the world, but it was probably made popular by a comic book. But here it is.

With great responsibility comes great power. Or with great power comes great responsibility. All right. Who can name the comic? I know it's not just me. Spider-Man. Thank you. I'm not alone. With great power comes great responsibility. You see, those that are in positions of authority, your thoughts, your views, your actions, your beliefs affect those who look up to you. You are leading by example, whether you want to or not.

And I know many of you would say, "Pastor, I'm not worried about it. I'm not in a position of authority." Nobody looks up to me, but I'm telling you that's not true. There are always individuals that are watching you, looking up to you, whether you realize it or not, and your decisions are impacting other people's lives, either for the good or for the bad. All of our decisions have consequences. The effects of our decisions ripple out further than we could possibly imagine.

And so the first question that I want you to think about today as you maybe reflect on the message or this week is this, how are you using your power? Or how are you using your authority? Are you using it to advance your own agenda? Maybe just accomplishing what you want to do. Are you using your power to get what you want? Maybe even in an unethical way? Maybe you're using your power truly for evil intentions.

Maybe you think about ways that you can lift yourself up and tear others down. Now, I want to give you some more specific examples because many people in here today would say, "Pastor, no, I don't struggle with that. I'm not in a huge position of authority, and I'm not doing the things that these kings are doing." So I want to give you some more ideas as to how you and I can sometimes use our power in a negative way. Number one, maybe you use the authority that you have in your home to always get your way in what you want.

However you use that power, maybe it's because it's a self-given power. Maybe you have a way of manipulating or whatever it is, but you're using your authority to get what you want in a selfish way. Maybe we struggle with that. Maybe you use your power and your position at work to always make yourself look good and everyone else

look bad. You know there's always ways to do that, aren't there? There are always ways to kind of make it feel like you're lifting yourself up and you're tearing others down.

And sometimes you even tear others down so that you will be lifted up. Maybe that is one way. Another way, maybe you use your wealth to buy things only for your own consumption instead of helping others out. For whatever reason, here in the West, we have the belief that everything that we have is for our own consumption and not to be shared. And so we just continue to build and build. And so is it possible that some of our power comes because of some of our wealth?

And do we use that to bless others, or do we use it to only build our own kingdom? Finally, maybe you use your knowledge to help you get ahead, but not to benefit anybody else. Maybe you intentionally withhold things that you know would help others because that might not help you. And so these are different ways that sometimes we may use our positions of authority or power in a way that does not honor God.

Again, recognize in verse 2 that Micah recalls King Ahab and the coveting of the field of Naboth and his deception and his selfishness. Micah tells us are a stench in the nose of God. Let's go on to verse 3. "Therefore, the Lord says, "I am planning disaster against this people from which you cannot save yourselves. For you will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity.

In that day, men will ridicule you. They will taunt you with this mournful song. We are utterly ruined. My people's possession is divided up. He takes it from me. He assigns our fields to traitors. Therefore, you will have no one in the assembly of the Lord to divide the land by lot. Why? Because it will all be taken from you. The very things that you desired, the very things that you fought for, the very things that you committed evil for will be taken from you anyway.

It will all be for nothing, Micah says. You're not going to get away with it. You will be found out. Your sin will follow you. And the evil behavior will be judged. Your power, your authority will be stripped from you. This certainly was all true of Israel's leaders, and it is still true today. You can only lie and deceive and be corrupt for so long. Eventually, you will be found out.

He goes on in verse 6, "Do not prophesy," their prophets say, "Do not prophesy about these things. Disgrace will not overtake us. Should it be said, O house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord angry? Does he do such things? Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright? Lately, my people have risen up like an enemy.

You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without care like men returning from battle. Evil people don't want you to point out that what they're doing is evil. Has anybody ever figured this out yet? I think if any of you had a sibling, you know this to be true. Maybe you had an older brother or sister or a younger brother or sister, and they're doing something wrong, and you go and tell mom and dad, "What's their response?" Well, don't be a tattletale. Or, "Well, what are you doing?

Just keep your mouth shut. Just mind your own business." This is what happens because when you're doing something that is wrong, you often know it and you don't want other people to call you out. Maybe you have even been in a position where somebody told you to just be quiet. Just be quiet. I know that I can't say the phrase that I want to because it's offensive to son. They're basically telling Micah to close his mouth or they will close it for him. And so we have that offensive phrase that some people say. So here's a question I have for you.

How do you respond when someone tells you to stop speaking what you know to be the truth? How are we supposed to respond? Maybe we're in a position and we feel the need to point truth. How do we respond when somebody tells us to keep quiet or to close our mouth? Well, I will tell you that knowing how to respond takes discernment and prayer because as you look at Scripture, there are often two answers that God would give.

When somebody was speaking the truth, the first is that sometimes God was okay if you just dusted off your feet and moved on and just ignored it. You went somewhere else because the people weren't listening. There's other times where God tells you, "I want you to stay there and to stay strong and to keep speaking the truth." So

those are the two options. The one that I think of is when Jesus is with His disciples and He sends them out to go share the good news, and He says, "Listen, if the people in that city won't listen, shake the dust off your feet and move on." That was one response.

But then I think about the prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament. He was called to speak the truth to the kings of Israel to try to get them to repent. And he was told from the very beginning that the kings would not listen. How would you like that job? I want you to do this, but it's not going to do any good, but keep doing it. And that's what God told Jeremiah. That's why he's known as the weeping prophet because he gets punished. He gets thrown into a well. Bad things happen to him, but God wanted him to continue to speak the truth.

So how do you know when it's time to open your mouth or to move on? I don't know. It takes prayer and discernment. That's what it takes because both options are available here. Micah goes on in verse nine. He says, "You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever. So get up. Go away. For this is not your resting place. Because it is defiled, it is ruined beyond all remedy."

If a liar and deceiver comes and says to you, "I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer. He would be just the prophet for this people." Micah says, "Listen, the decisions that you make have impacts on other people far and wide. Because of these decisions, Micah says, "Listen, you have run the women from their pleasant homes. You have taken away God's blessing upon the people. And the more people you lead, the more impact your decisions have."

So Micah says to them and he says to us, "Don't take this lightly." And in fact, recognizing that my decisions impact a lot of other people gives me a built-in sense of accountability. So let me just be honest with you for a second as a pastor in the community. You guys need to know I wish that all of my good decisions that I make in life were simply because I wanted to make the good decision. But that's not true. Sometimes my good decisions are made because I know the consequences that they're going to have, and I know who they're going to affect.

And so because I don't want it to affect other people, I make the good decision, not necessarily because I want to or because I just have all good inside of me, but it's because I know how it's going to affect somebody else. I think you all have made similar decisions in your life. And so Micah says, "Don't take this lightly." Certainly, in the case of Israel, the decisions that these corrupt leaders were making was going to affect the entire nation of Israel. And the leaders then would only listen to those that they wanted to listen to.

They would actually bring prophets that would say what they wanted to hear. So let me take a moment here to address the way that many of us are similar to those leaders. It is only natural for us and normal to surround ourselves with people who agree with us and say what we want to hear. It's just what we do. We don't like to be around people that don't agree with us or always want to fight with us about whatever it is. We just surround ourselves with people who tell us what we want to hear.

And I'm here to tell you that's not healthy. It's not healthy to only surround yourself with yes men or people that are going to agree with everything that you believe. We all need somebody in our lives who will speak the truth to us even when it isn't fun to hear. And so here is my question for you. Who do you have in your life that can speak truth to you? In first service, some people looked at their spouses, right, and they started to giggle. And that's often the case.

Our spouse can speak truth to us. We all need somebody that can speak the truth to us even when it hurts. Because when you don't, that's how you end up like some of these kings that we read about. That's how you end up like some of the rulers even in our world today that think they're above the law or they're above consequences, right? We all have people that we know that think they're above the law, and it's because nobody called them out for what they were doing.

So now let's end on a positive note. As we end chapter two, Micah is going to give us a glimmer of hope, a section of hope that even though the leaders are making bad decisions, that God is still faithful. He is still gracious. He is still loving. And so he says in verse 12, "I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob. I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture.

The place will throng with people." We get this image of how God cares for us as His people. And it's this image that has been used often in Scripture, the idea that God is our shepherd, that our faithful God is promising, that He will bring together a remnant of the Israelites so that they will continue to be His chosen people. He's not giving up. He is going to be their shepherd. Care for them. Care for that remnant like sheep in a pen and like a flock in its pasture.

He is the shepherd who continues to love you and me even when we need to be disciplined because of our actions. God is one that can truly discipline out of love because He cares. We go on to verse 13, the last verse of chapter 2. One who breaks open the way will go up before them. They will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them the Lord at their head.

Micah is reminding them and reminding us that He is going to rescue us. He will rescue us from evil people. He will not abandon us. He will not leave us. He will go before us and says that He will break open the gates. Often, as you think about a shepherd and a sheep and a gate pen, that gate was there to protect the sheep from people that were coming from the outside or animals that would come from the outside.

But in this case, Micah says that God is going to break open that gate because the gate that was intended to bring safety and freedom was actually bringing bondage to the sheep. And so the Lord will break open the gate and we will leave that gate so that we can experience true freedom. These leaders were taking advantage of those that they were supposed to be protecting.

This is why in the next section next week, Micah is going to call out specifically some of these leaders and prophets for their evil things that they have done because they were given a huge responsibility to care for the people. And instead of caring for them, they were taking advantage of them. So here's some questions I want you to think about this week as you reflect on today's message. Who do your decisions impact the most? Think about your life and where God has placed you.

Maybe it's your spouse if you're married. Maybe it's your siblings if you're not married and your family structure as a whole. Maybe it's your kids if you have children. Maybe it's your coworkers at work. Your decisions affect them. Your decisions certainly affect your friends. Maybe you go to school, it affects your class, your graduating class, it affects other members of your family. Your decisions affect the church, your neighborhood, your city, your state, your decisions, whether you realize it or not, affect the next generation as well.

People you may never even know. Again, taking into account who your decisions will impact can help with some built-in accountability, and all of us can use that. Maybe today, you're being asked to close your mouth. You have tried to speak truth to people in your life that you love, or you've tried to speak truth to people in your life that God has just placed around you, and they don't love you in return for that. What is God asking you to do?

Is He asking you to continue to speak the truth, or is He asking you to move on and find somebody else who will listen to the truth? Maybe there is another fertile field out there that will listen to the truth that you have to speak. And number three, do you have someone in your life that speaks the truth? We all need people who can call us out when we need to be called out. Micah is talking about the Israelite nation, that there's a time of judgment coming for the Israelite people. And of course, we know history.

In 586 BC, he brings the Babylonians to destroy the nation of Judah because of their disobedience. This judgment comes because they've not been faithful to the covenant that God has made to them. And it is long overdue, and God gave them many chances because God is a God of grace. He is a God of mercy. And so the

same is true today. God is a God of mercy. He's a God of grace. He is faithful and he can be trusted. But it is also true that if we do not change, judgment will come.

He gives us so much time. He gives us so much grace to make those right decisions. But if we don't, God in a loving way will bring judgment because our decisions aren't just impacting us, but they're impacting those around us. And God loves them just as much as He loves you. And so sometimes He makes the hard call. And oftentimes, we want God's judgment on others, but we don't want it on ourselves. We say, "God, why are you waiting so long to judge so-and-so?"

It seems so evil." And yet, you are receiving God's grace and mercy in that moment. We all receive God's grace and mercy. There's not a single one of us here that deserves to be here or earn to be here. Just last night, as I was praying in bed, I couldn't fall asleep, and I was thanking God for His faithfulness in my life. And just going back to being a child and the family that I was raised in, and going to the church I went to, and then there was something bad that happened in that church that then brought me to a different church, a missionary church that my family brought me to.

And there was a pastor there that spoke to my parents, so we stayed there. And then God brought in another pastor that had kids that I ended up building a relationship with. And so I was able to learn from that pastor, not just on Sunday mornings, but in their family, and just all of the things that fall into place that you look back and say, "God, it's only because of you." For without your plan, I would have made a mess of things. There's lots of things that happened in my life that I was angry at God about. I didn't make the basketball team in middle school. I loved basketball.

And all the kids that made the basketball team, I would beat playing outside. And I'm like, "Why didn't I make the basketball team?" I look back on that now and go, "You know what? If I would have made the basketball team, maybe I wouldn't have gone to church youth group. Maybe I wouldn't have made these friends. I would have made other friends. I can look back on things that God didn't give me that I thought I wanted, and I can truly say thank you for that because it's what brings us here today. We are all here by God's grace and by His mercy. The altars are always open to come and pray or to offer your thanks to God because of His grace and mercy.

There will be people that would love to pray with you if you want on the sides or you can just come to the altars and do your business with God. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace and mercy and forgiveness in our lives. Thank you for loving us where we were at. And Father, we're all in positions of authority and power, whether we realize it or not. And my prayer for us as individuals and as a church and as a congregation, that we would use those positions for your praise, that we would make sure that you are being lifted up and that we would not be selfish, inward-looking or thinking.

But instead, you would give us your spirit and your heart. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.