

Micah: Broken People, Faithful God

Introduction

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Micah 1

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Two weeks ago at the church, we had summer sports jam. I think we had roughly 180 kids that signed up to come, which was awesome, and for the last few years, Jessica and Carrie have put me in charge of flag football. That means that I had the responsibility each evening to keep the attention of a group of kids ranging in ages from 7 to 11 for about 25 minutes.

The group sizes were anywhere from 10 all the way up to 18 kids. And I know some of you are thinking, well, that doesn't seem so bad. That's not a difficult task. But you have to add to the fact that when we did Summer Sports Jam, every evening, the real field temp was over 100 degrees, and I am pretty sure that every kid was hyped up on sugar by the time they came to flag football. I think I'm still trying to recover from that.

I'm still kind of taking daily naps to recover from that time. But I've done this for a few years, and I've learned a lot. For instance, when you have 18 kids all having a football in their hand, you need to keep your head on a swivel. That is rule number one. It was the first year that I actually learned that lesson the hard way.

I had turned my head and I was helping one little kid with the football, teaching him how to hold it so that he could throw the football, while another kid, unbeknownst to me, had walked up in front of me, and from a foot away, threw the football at my front side as hard as he could. I still to this day think that he knew exactly what he was doing, and I had a bad stomach ache for the rest of the night, and I talked a few octaves higher to the rest of the kids that came.

Jessica and Carrie, I believe, are lucky that I still help after that. I really think it should have been a one and done, but I do continue to help with flag football. Which leads me to the topic for today of discipline, all right? Discipline. You see, as a parent, as a teacher, as a pastor, I want you to think about the question, how do you respond when your child or a child misbehaves? How do you respond in that situation?

I can tell you that my immediate reaction after I felt the pain of that football hitting my front side was not very good. And if my prefrontal cortex hadn't kicked in and calmed me down, it might have been a bad situation. You might have read about something in the newspaper of a pastor and a kid at summer sports jam. You see, a loving parent, a loving teacher, will discipline their children out of love and not anger.

I'm not sure that I fully transitioned from anger to love that evening, but that is our goal when we care for others. Discipline is actually a good thing. It's good for parents to use, and it is good for children to experience. Now, even when I make that statement, I know that it isn't fun for either party. It's not fun for parents to have to discipline, and it's not fun for children to experience discipline.

Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." I like this verse because the author of Hebrews says, "This idea of discipline is a process." He says, "It will bring righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." It's something that takes time, it takes energy, it takes effort.

It doesn't just happen. And that learning of discipline comes with some bumps and bruises along the way. And it's not just the child or the person being disciplined that gets the bumps and bruises. It is hard for parents as well to discipline your children because you know in some way it is going to bring temporary pain. I know some children and teenagers don't believe this, but parents want to see their children happy.

Parents want their kids to be happy. They want to see them laughing. And so when a parent forces their child out of punishment to sit in a timeout or has to take a toy away, it hurts the parent as well, because we want our children to be happy, but the parent is willing to do that. They are willing to discipline because a parent can see the bigger picture. And they know that in the long run, that temporary pain will bring long-term growth.

Proverbs 3:11 says, "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke because the Lord disciplines those He loves just as a Father does with the Son He delights in. Just as a parent out of maturity can see the bigger picture. And so enforce some temporary pain for long-term growth, so also God disciplines us, those that He loves, because He can see the bigger picture.

He knows what is best for us, and when He disciplines us, it offers us hope. Today, we're going to be in a series, and we're going to start a series in the Old Testament book of Micah, and we're going to call this series "Broken People Faithful God." Because this series is going to take us through this Old Testament book of Micah, where the prophet Micah is going to repeatedly warn the people Israel, the people that are God's chosen people of the Lord's impending discipline because of their disobedience.

He gets to be the mouthpiece of God that warns all of these people that discipline is coming because of your disobedience. Fortunately, you'll see a pattern in the book of Micah. Not only does he share about the discipline that is coming, but after every section where he shares about the discipline, he also shares about the Lord's faithfulness, and that God has made a covenant promise with the Israelites, and He will keep it.

And so Micah, even in this book of impending destruction for the people, there is hope that on the other side of these judgments, God will once again bless them. And as we go through this book together, we are going to see how this can apply to our lives, even though this is 2,700 years ago, what we can learn from the prophet Micah, what we can learn from discipline, and what we can learn from the warnings that you and I receive from God.

So if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up to Micah chapter 1. We're going to begin in verse 1, and we're going to make it all the way through the first chapter today, and we'll stop at the end, even though the end of Micah chapter 1 is not a great place to end. That's where we're going to stop, because it's all we're going to get through. If you have your Bibles, you can turn there. If you have your phone, you can go to UVersion, and you can go to events and find Fair of Your Missionary Church. All of the Scripture will be there as well, or if you have your iPads, or if you are old school, there is a Bible in the pew in front of you.

You can actually open and see it there too, okay? Micah chapter 1, let me pray and then we will begin. Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your discipline, though at times it is painful and we don't want to endure it. We know that you discipline because You love, because You care, and because You can see the bigger picture. Father, you often see where our path leads to before we can comprehend it.

And so, if that path doesn't lead to something good, you may try to redirect us. And so, Father, I pray that we would be willing to be redirected by You. And as we read through the prophet Micah, as we try to understand what was taking place in Israel at that time, that it also would shine a light on our hearts and on our lives, and that we would heed your warnings and your instructions. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Micah chapter 1, starting in verse 1, we read, "The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moreshet during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." In this very first verse, we are given a lot of information about the book. We find out where we are at in the world, we find out what time we are at in the world.

We'll get a date here shortly as to roughly when all of this is taking place. And again, we are reminded that when we read Scripture, we're not just reading somebody's story of fantasy, we are reading about real history. We are given titles of kings, we are given locations of cities, we are given time frames because the authors, and I believe God wants us to understand we can trust the Bible. It's real. And so as we're reading in the story of Micah, this is a real time in history.

We first find out that Micah lives in a small town of Moreshet in southern Israel, a very small place. We know that because of the kings of Judah that are mentioned there, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, that this is taking place somewhere between 700 and 650 BC. Because of that date, we know that the nation of Israel has already been divided into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom because they're fighting amongst themselves.

So you have the northern kingdom which is called Israel and the southern kingdom which is called Judah. The capital of the northern kingdom is Samaria. The capital of the southern kingdom is Jerusalem. And so we have these two nations that are still God's chosen people, and they are being disobedient to what God has called them to be. Due to the timeframe that we're in because of these kings again, because of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, we know that Micah is not the only prophet that is talking to the Israelites at this time.

God had multiple prophets speaking truth. He is a contemporary with Isaiah and Hosea. Again, Isaiah would be a major prophet, we say in the Old Testament just because his book is larger, and Hosea, you may have heard of those prophets. And Isaiah and Hosea, the difference between those two and Micah is that Isaiah and Hosea are from the big city. They're from the Jerusalem area, whereas Micah is from a small town, Moreshet to the south.

And so it'd be like Micah is from Angola, but Isaiah is from Fort Wayne or Indianapolis, okay? And you'll see some of the differences as they're calling out the Israelites into what they're supposed to be doing. You'll see their mindset is changed a little bit because of where they come from and also what they know. Micah, in this first chapter, is going to receive a vision concerning the fall of Israel.

And of course, the fall of Israel, not just the northern kingdom, but the southern kingdom, is because they have not been faithful to the covenant that God made with them. And so we go to verse 2, "Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth, and all who are in it, that the sovereign Lord may witness against you the Lord from His holy temple." Micah is writing this to His people, but He's also writing it to us. Notice that He addresses it to all of you.

Listen, all the earth as to what the Lord is going to do. He is going to come and do something from His temple. In a little bit, He is going to even address some of the specific issues that the Israelites are doing in chapter 2 against what God has called them to do. And so we move on to verse 3. "Look," Micah says, "The Lord is coming from His dwelling place. He comes down and He treads the high places of the earth.

The mountains melt beneath Him, and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down on a slope. He's receiving this vision of the glory and power of God coming down out of heaven to earth. This is not the first time in the Scriptures that we have a vision like this representing the glory of God.

When the temple was built, the glory of God came over the temple, and so Micah is having this similar vision of the Lord coming down, but He is coming down, not to show love, but to bring judgment upon His people. Verse 5, "All of this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the house of Israel. For what is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria, the capital city to the north?

And what is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem to the south? Therefore, I will make Samaria a heap of rubble and a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations. All of her idols will be broken to pieces. All of her temple gifts will be burned with fire. I will destroy all of her images since she has gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes.

So as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used." This was not a good vision that Micah receives from the Lord. This probably felt more like a nightmare. When we first received this vision of God that's coming down to the temple in Ezekiel, as the temple is being built, it is His glory, it is beautiful, His presence brings life and hope. And so you just think about, I don't know, a beautiful sunset or something.

God's glory is present, but the vision that Micah receives, yes, is still God coming down in His glory, but it's coming down in His power and His might for the intended purpose of laying waste to Samaria and to Jerusalem. He says He's going to level them so that the cities will be demolished. It will no longer be a city, but it will be a field where people will plant crops. This is a time of judgment. I'm not sure that Micah wanted to share this initially.

Could you imagine if you go home from church today and you go take a nap and you receive a vision from the Lord that the church, Fairview Missionary Church, because of our sin, is going to be destroyed. The entire property is going to be burned to the ground. And so you see this power of God coming down and burn this entire place, and God says He is going to do it because of the sin of the people. You wouldn't wake up from that vision and go, "Oh, I got to call pastor. I have something to tell him." Right?

You wouldn't be very excited about that. It wouldn't be something you're looking forward to. It would instill some kind of fear and like, wow, God, I can't believe you would ever do something like this. How fearful would it be for you to see something in this vision that you love being destroyed? This was a call to repentance. It was Micah giving us vision to try to get the Israelites to turn around, but of course we know because of history, the Israelites would not listen.

They would not heed the warning of Micah. Now I know it's easy to read a story like this from 2,700 years ago and think, "But Pastor, how does this apply to my life? What am I supposed to learn about this?" So the Israelites weren't smart and they didn't listen to God. What do you want me to do, right? Here's how we can apply this to our lives. Here's a question for you to ask of yourselves. Have you ever had a time in your life when you received a warning from someone, but you didn't listen?

Have you ever had a time where somebody, even probably somebody that loved you greatly, tried to redirect your path, tried to give you some insight, give you a warning, maybe you were struggling with something, maybe you were struggling with an addiction, and so somebody that you loved came to you with as much heart and love as they could and said, "Listen, you're having a problem with this, whatever the substance is, and I think that you need to get some help." And you didn't listen. You said it's okay, I've got it. I don't have a problem. I'll take care of it, all right?

I will take care of it. Maybe it was a parent that tried to warn you about the decisions that you were making because they saw that your decisions were leading you on a path that led to a road you did not want to go. And so as a loving parent, they came to you and said, "Please, would you begin to shift your perspective and not make these types of decisions because it's going to end somewhere you don't want to be? Maybe it was a boss who came to you at some point and shared with you, you know you're kind of on thin ice, and unless you begin to change your habits and your pattern, you might not have a job here anymore.

Maybe it was a youth pastor who warned you that if you continued to make the same decisions you were making, that you could possibly even end up in jail because of some of your decisions. And so they shared that out of love and said, "Let's begin to move in a different direction." You see, when someone gives you that warning, the parent, the boss, the youth pastor, they're giving you that warning out of love, and so God is giving this warning to the Israelites out of love.

It's out of compassion. So he sends these prophets to tell them, "This is what's going to happen if things don't change." Only a loving God would give that warning before He would just come down and say, "I'm just going to

get rid of all of them." So we go on in verse 8. "Because of this," Micah says, "I will weep and I will wail. I will go about barefoot and naked.

I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl." I just have to pause here and just say, "I am so grateful that God doesn't call me as a pastor to do this." Could you imagine if I was still upset because you guys weren't listening to my sermons and I said, "That's it, next week I'm coming up naked, I'm just gonna start howling like a jackal," right? This is how upset he is. He's just saying, "Listen, I don't care anymore. I don't care what you think of me. I don't care. I'm so distraught. Will you just listen?" He's trying to get their attention.

He probably got their attention, but maybe not the way that he wanted, all right? He says, "Listen, for her wound is incurable. This plague of Samaria is incurable. It has come to Judah. It has reached the very gate of My people, even to Jerusalem itself. Tell it not in Gath. Weep not at all. Bet Ophrah, roll in the dust. Pass on in nakedness and shame. You who live in Shaffir.

Those who live in Zehnan will not come out. Bet Azel is in mourning. Its protection is taken from you. Sorry, I have to find where I was. Verse 12, "Those who live in Murat writhe in pain, waiting for relief because disaster has come from the Lord even to the gates of Jerusalem. It has even reached our capital city. There are bad things that are happening.

You who live in Lakish. Harness the team of the chariot. You were the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you. Therefore, you will give parting gifts to Mareshat Gath. The town of Akzib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. I will bring a conqueror against you who live in Mahashah. He who is the glory of Israel will come to Adulam.

So shave your heads in mourning for the children in whom you delight. Make yourself as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile. Here is the proof that Micah is saying, "Listen, you have caused me so much anguish because of this vision that I have received. I'm going to weep. I'm going to wail. I'm going to walk around barefoot and naked. And you know, it doesn't matter where you live.

You might think because you're not in Jerusalem, you're not in Samaria, that your city is somehow going to survive this judgment of God, but you're not. He begins to list cities that to you and I don't necessarily mean anything because we don't live in that culture and in that time, but it would be like somebody prophesying against Angola and Auburn and Ashley and Fremont and Fort Wayne and saying, listen, it doesn't matter where you live. You might think that the destruction is only going to come to the big city because that's where all the bad people are.

But he's saying, "No, the bad people are everywhere. You are the bad people. Destruction is coming. You have all sinned. You have all turned away from God. Every single one of you, you need to repent and turn to Him, or we are going to receive the destruction of the Lord. As I said, the end of chapter 1 is not very uplifting spot to stop, right? But because of time, we need to pause, we're going to take a break at the end of chapter 1.

If you're discouraged, go home and read chapter 2, okay? Because in chapter 2, he's going to continue to call out some of the individuals, some of the sins that are taking place as the leaders are taking advantage of others. Whether it's the prophets or the kings, they're taking advantage of others, and so he's going to continue to call out individual sins. But then at the end of chapter two, as Micah does progressively in his book, he's going to offer hope. He's going to offer hope that things will go back to normal.

There will be a blessing that comes after this. God is doing this because He is a loving God, because He is a caring God. So let's end with one more question. This is the question that I want you to ponder today, whether you take some time this afternoon or this week. Is there a warning that you are ignoring today? Is there a warning that you are ignoring today? Has someone in your life who loves you deeply pointed something out to you?

But you have ignored them, and maybe you even got mad at them. Maybe somebody came to you and said, "Hey, this is not easy for me to say, but I see this going on in your life, and I want to offer help in whatever way I can. This is not me condemning you. I'm not judging you. I'm no better than you, but I really think that this is going to lead down a path that you don't want to go on." And instead of receiving that warning, you used a phrase like, "Well, don't judge me," or, "Well, you got a lot of issues too," or, "I'll take care of it, it's fine, I will figure it out." Maybe you are on a path that is leading to destruction.

This morning you know it, but you're finding it hard to turn around. You know you have a struggle, you know you have an issue, you know you have an addiction, you know you have something, and you say, I know I need to fix it, but I just can't. I don't know how to turn around. Maybe even today there's some here or watching online that God is calling you to Him today for the first time to repent of your sins and to turn to Him and proclaim Him as Lord, but you've been trying to ignore it for so long.

Can I just encourage you, don't ignore the calls, heed the warning, change directions. Often when God brings discipline or pain in our life, these warnings are a sign of God's grace. These warnings are a blessing from Him. They are a gift. I'm not saying they're fun to hear. I'm not saying you have to be joyous about it, but God is showing you them out of love. Maybe today you need prayer, and as always, we'll have people on both sides that would love to pray with you.

If you don't want to talk to anybody yet, you can just come to the altars and pray, and nobody will bother you. Next week, we're going to receive that message of hope from God and the prophet Micah, that God continues to remain faithful to who He is, that He, out of His grace and mercy, gives you and I a path out of our mess that we put ourselves in. And every single one of us has done that.

All too often in life, as I think back on my own life and as I think about the hundreds of meetings that I've had in my office, most of us are not surprised or unaware of the struggles and sins that we have in our lives. We know they're there, we know that we struggle with them, we know that they're hard, but whether it's pride or whether it's fear, whatever it is, whether it's just the deception of the enemy, we think, you know what, I know that's an issue, but I can't share it with everybody, so I'll take care of it myself.

I can't share that with other people, I can't share with my spouse, with my kids, with my church, with my pastor. I can't do that. I will just handle it myself. And I know that I've done that in my own life. I'm not calling you out. This is for me as well, where I think, "You know what? I struggle with this. I will just take care of it in-house. I'll deal with it." And it's like immediately when I say that, God taps me on the shoulder and says, "If you were gonna do that, wouldn't you have done it already?" "Wouldn't you have done it already?" "Yeah, I probably would have.

I do need some help from somebody else." And so when we ask for help, it's actually a sign of strength, not weakness. When we ask for help, it's a sign of wisdom, not foolishness. It's okay to ask for help. And yet I know that even bringing up some of these things, there's nobody that's going to want to come up front because you're going to think, I don't want the whole church to know I have a secret sin. How often do I have to tell you? We already know. I already know all of you have secret struggles.

I get it, but this is the place where you can deal with those. This is the place where you have people that are going to love you and walk through that with you, not judge you because of it. I even hesitantly say, "I don't want to call out specific sins," because then you're like, "Well, I'm definitely not going up now, because mine is one of those three, and I don't want people to know." So I intentionally don't even call out specific sins, but all too often, as Pastor Sam said in his prayer first service as he was closing the service, we feel we're the exception.

27:00

Sin deceives us to say it's okay, I can do that, I can handle it, I can control it, I am the exception of everybody else. They might have problems with it, but I won't. I'll be okay. You're not the exception. Human history has proven there are certain things

that trip us up. We have to admit those things, we have to repent, we turn to Him, and He will walk with us. So the front is open for prayer to do your business with God.

27:31

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us a path out of our mess. Every one of us has created a mess in our lives. We've made mistakes. We need your discipline. We need your warning to turn us back on track. And so, Father, I pray that if we have those that have loved us in a genuine and real way and have called out things to us, have pointed out things to us, that we would heed the call, that we would take the direction, that we would receive the discipline, and we would move forward.

28:06

I thank You for Your grace and for Your mercy that You offer to us. There's not a single person in here that deserves Your grace and mercy. It is a gift that You have given to us. And so if there are some here today that haven't even submitted to You for that first time and proclaimed You as Lord, I pray that as Your Spirit is grabbing ahold of them right now, that they would turn from their sins, that they would proclaim You as Lord, that they would put their hope in Your resurrection, that they would begin this beautiful journey today.

28:36

We ask all of this in Jesus' name, Amen.