

# Micah: Broken People, Faithful God

## *People of Integrity*

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Micah 4-6

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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One of the most difficult part of relationships is this idea of expectations. I'm sure we all have stories that we could share where we thought we understood the expectations of a relationship going into it. But somehow, we find out we didn't exactly know what the expectations were. And so because of that, there was some kind of fallout, some kind of miss, something that happened in that relationship. It's probably happened with your spouse.

Probably happens in your group of friends. It probably happens at the workplace. Certainly in all of our relationships. Carolyn and I have had the privilege of going on many marriage retreats and we love reading books about parenting and doing devotions about what it means for a marriage to be godly and some ways that we can improve that. And we have had numerous times this topic of expectations come up, how important it is to clearly communicate your expectations.

I have had to learn to ask my wife what the expectations are for me in certain situations, and she has learned to do the same. One of the ways that we have really figured out a perpetual argument that we have is often on Saturday mornings. On Saturday mornings now, when we wake up, one of the first things that she will say to me is, "What are you wanting to get done today?" Because one of our arguments was always waking up and I have this to-do list in my head, and it's not been communicated with her.

And I just have the expectation she knows I have a list. And so I start working on that list, and she wakes up with a completely different expectation. Maybe we're going to hang out as a family or do something fun. And so she'll say, "What do you want to get done today?" And then often, she will follow up that question with, "What are you wanting today to look like?" And I will try to reciprocate that to her and say, "Okay, here is what I think today is going to look like. What do you think today is going to look like?" And we kind of come to some balance there and it really has helped our relationship.

So much so that now when I have the privilege to do premarital counseling for couples that I'm going to perform their ceremony, I will always spend time talking about this idea of expectations and communication. It doesn't matter how much time I try to convince the young ladies that are just about to get married, that even though they just have this deep inner desire, that they just want their husbands to know what they want and then do it, it's probably not going to happen.

Most men at a young age and even us older men don't have a clue what women really want and what they desire. And so I will tell these young ladies, you just need to communicate that with your spouse. Just let them know. And inevitably, the young woman will come back and they'll say, "But I just want my husband to want to do those things." And I say, "That's never going to happen." Very few times is that actually going to happen, that he's just going to want to do what you want him to do.

But for you, please make it good enough that he's willing to do it even though he doesn't want to. That's what we do. In women, it's the same way. Men have expectations of things that we want, and we want you just to

want to do those things. And sometimes it just doesn't work out. And so we need to know and appreciate in our relationships if somebody is willing to do it, even though they don't want to do it because they love you, that's a good sign. You guys shouldn't have been looking at each other, your spouses, while I'm talking about this, all right?

So here's the real question, though, for today, because this idea of expectations also comes into our relationship with God. Is it possible that you and I have false expectations in our relationship with God? Do we feel that we must live a certain way or give in such a way that He will be pleased with us? And so the follow-up question that I want you to spend time thinking about today, this afternoon, the rest of the week is this.

Is our relationship with God a burden because we are trying to meet expectations He doesn't have. Today, as we wrap up our series in Micah, as we are discovering what this minor prophet in the Old Testament is sharing with us, we are going to hear the exact expectations that God has for us in our relationship with Him. He doesn't hide them. He doesn't try to make you discover them in some secret way.

He is being that friend that's saying, "Listen, this is what I expect in our relationship so that you and I know exactly what to do. My prayer is that what his expectations are may surprise you. My prayer is that as you hear these expectations, instead of it being a burden that is put upon you, it will actually be a moment of peace and clarity.

Because you and I are often raised in a world of religious things that we have to do and have to accomplish to somehow please God, and we will actually see what pleases God. And I believe for many of you, it will give you peace. So let me pray, and then we will jump in to Micah. We are going to begin in Micah chapter 6:1, and I'll explain why we are starting in Micah 6: 1. Let me pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for making your expectations clear, that it's not a moving target that we're trying to attain. And I thank you, as we're going to discover, that it's not a long list of things that we have to do to somehow please you. I pray that this would bring peace and clarity and comfort for everybody that's here today listening online, listening on the radio, that a burden would be released, maybe the heavy load that we have been carrying in God that you would be praised.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, those of you that have been following along and have been here for the last few weeks, as we've been going through Micah, you say, "Wait a second, how are we in Micah chapter 6?" Pastor, you skipped the rest of chapter 4 and chapter 5. And yes, I'm going to openly admit that. And I want to explain to you why, because I don't want to miscommunicate. I don't want you to think that there's something in the end of chapter 4 or in chapter 5 that is too difficult for me to discuss, or that I'm jumping over something that's going to be too debated. That's not the case at all.

The reason why we're jumping to chapter 6 is because I only planned for four lessons in the Book of Micah. And I have a habit of doing this. Just so you all know how I kind of plan out the sermons throughout the year. I spend time praying about it and really thinking through it at the end of every year, and I plan the rest of the next year. And so I will say, "Okay, we got an Easter, we have Christmas, we have all of these things." And then I will say, "God, what do you want us to study?

What do you want us to go through?" And one of the things that I enjoy doing as a pastor is taking congregations and people through sections of Scripture that normally we wouldn't go to ourselves, ones that maybe people are afraid of, or they're like, "Oh, I'm not going to get anything out of Micah. You know We're just going to skip over that prophet." So I enjoyed doing that, but I even underestimated how much God could teach us through Micah. I thought I was being bold and saying, "Okay, we're going to take four weeks on Micah. God, you better give me some messages to preach, all right?

You know I read through it and I thought four would be good." But as I began to study Micah for this series, there's a lot more than what I thought was there, which is true of all of scripture. And so because this is going to

sound bad, because I like what is in chapter 6 and 7 more than four and five, and I only have one week left, we're doing six and seven. So that's why we're doing it. But there is one verse in chapter 5 that I can't just skip over because for you and for me, I think it is a huge blessing and it is an awesome piece of evidence for who God is.

So before we even jump into six, I have to share chapter 5 verse 2. You can turn there. It'll be on the screen. It's just one verse. Micah chapter 5: 2, Micah says this, "But you, Bethlehem, Ephrata, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me, one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Now, just one verse I need to remind you.

Micah wrote this around 700 BC. So 700 years earlier, Micah predicted that a ruler was going to come from Bethlehem that was from of old, from ancient times, or that can be interpreted as days of eternity. This ruler that is going to rule over Israel is from eternity, and he is going to be born in Bethlehem. Does that ring any bells to you guys?

Can you believe that 700 years before Jesus was born, God through Micah predicted that was going to happen? That, to me, is just an amazing like, "Wow. Outside of God, what are the odds that this would happen just by chance or dumb luck?" Let me just tell you not good because I don't know what it is. It is astronomical that this would happen outside of God or be an accident. This is just simply one more piece of evidence that hopefully, as maybe you're wrestling with your faith, is this really true? Maybe this is all made up.

This is another thing that you can look at. The prophecies in the Old Testament. Nobody can argue this. Proven when the book was written, we know about Jesus. How is that possible? Only God. That's how that's possible. Why would you choose Bethlehem? This picture is a picture of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Who would have predicted Bethlehem would have been the place where the Messiah is going to be born? Nobody, especially during this time because Bethlehem was extremely insignificant.

Bethlehem, along with the whole land of Judah, was filled with corruption and impending destruction. Why would something come from Bethlehem? Well, because God decided he wanted something to come from Bethlehem. And so we serve an awesome God. Just remember Micah 5:2, when somebody is questioning your faith or why you believe what you believe. This is another tool in your tool belt to say, "Look at these prophecies. What are the odds that that would happen?" All right. One cool verse. Now let's jump into Micah chapter 6.

Micah chapter 6, starting in verse 1, "Listen to what the Lord says. Stand up. Plead your case before the mountains. Let the hills hear what you have to say. Hear, O mountains, the Lord's accusations. Listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the Lord has a case against his people. He is lodging a charge against Israel. "My people, what have I done to you?" This is his charge.

"How have I burdened you? Answer me. For I brought you up out of Egypt and I redeemed you from the land of slavery. I even sent Moses to lead you along with Aaron and Miriam. My people, please remember what Balak, king of Moab, counseled, and what Balaam, son of Baor answered. Remember your journey from Satim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord. Here's the case that God is making against the Israelites.

He's saying, "Listen, do you know everything that I have done for you as a nation? As I called you out, I freed you from the land of Egypt. I sent you Moses and Aaron and Miriam, and I provided all of these things for you. Do you remember the story of Balaam and Balaam where he tries to send a curse upon the Israelites in Balaam with his witchcraft and whatever else, hears from God and says, "I can only give them a blessing, not a curse." God saying, "I have walked with you.

I have protected you." There are no more excuses for the Israelite people. God has been more than faithful, and still, the Israelites turn away. He saved them from Egypt, protected them on their journey in the wilderness. He gave them victory in the land. He used them as the judgment upon these evil nations over and over again. He provided rain and fertile soil so that they could eat and even store up extra crops for future use. When they began to turn away, he sent prophets to turn them back.

He gave them riches. He gave them fame. In fact, if even the hills and mountains could talk, they would testify that the Lord has been overly generous to them. And yet, with all of these blessings, with all of these gifts, the leaders and the people continue to turn away from the Lord and try to do it alone. It's easy for us to read this story again and look at these leaders and look at the people of Israel during Micah's time and say, "How foolish.

Why are you turning away from a God that is so good to you?" But then as soon as those words come out of your mouth, a mirror comes up and you go, "Ah, that's me. We are the foolish ones." God gives us so many good things, so many blessings, so many gifts in this life and in this world. And then we take them for granted. And we believe that it's all because of our own effort or our own doing.

And so we even begin to push Him out of our lives because what we have is because of us, not because of Him. And then something goes wrong in our lives. And again, we run back to Him. We turn back to Him and God will deliver us or protect us from whatever it is that's going on. And God will answer our prayers and things go well and we're filled with blessings and we're filled with goodness. And again, what do we do? We push God away. We say, "I've got this. I've got this. This cycle continues repeatedly.

And all too often we forget that every good thing in your life is from God. Every good thing that you and I have is from God. God is faithful. God is just. God is holy. God is the one that stays by our side. We are the ones that often move away from Him. So with all of these blessings, with all of these gifts, what should our response be to God? What is a proper response?

And Micah is going to ask that exact question, and then we will get the answer. Micah says, "With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God?" So here are some options that he is going to throw out. What should we give back to God for His blessings? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings with calves a year old? He's simply suggesting, "Should I follow the commands of the law?

Should I bring him the sacrifices and the tithes and the offerings that He has commanded from us?" Maybe we should go a little further. He goes on in verse 7, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with 10,000 rivers of olive oil?" He goes a step further, "Maybe, maybe, I got it. Should I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Now he goes beyond the law. What if I gave my firstborn?

What if I gave something of real value, something that cannot be replaced? Maybe that will please God. And then we have the answer in verse 8. Micah says, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?" There's the question. What does the Lord require of us because of all the blessings and the gifts that He has given us? What do we need to give back to Him and look at what God actually requires to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?

You would expect Him to want something in return. Maybe we can give back to God some of our gifts, some of our tithes, right? Maybe some of our offering. We can give back some of the money that He has given to us. We can sacrifice. Some people even go to the extent to say, "Man, God, you have done so much for me. I must live a miserable life here and now. I'm going to give everything, and I'm just going to be miserable because of what you have given to me." And God doesn't ask for that. God doesn't ask you to give everything.

If you choose to do that, that's great. God wants you to live life to the fullest and His command. If you will follow what it is that He actually wants you to do, He wants you to love others well. He wants you to act justly in how

you treat others. He wants you to love mercy, and He wants you to walk humbly. What does it mean to act justly? It means to be fair. It means to be honest.

It means to stand for truth and for righteousness. That is a call that God has put upon us, that we would stand for truth and for righteousness, that we would take care of the poor, the orphan, the widow, those that are overlooked. That's what it means to act justly, to love others well. And it's beyond just providing for the physical needs of other people. He doesn't want us just to act justly, but he wants us to love mercy.

What does it mean to love mercy? Well, remember, mercy is not receiving what you do deserve. That is a consequence or a negative. Mercy is not receiving the punishment that you should receive because of your actions. A great story in Scripture that explains what mercy is and how often we overlook it. In the New Testament, we read of the story of a rich king and a slave, a servant.

And in the story, the servant has borrowed money from the king for whatever he was doing. And he continued to borrow and borrow and borrow till he got to a point where he owed a debt to the king that was so large that he could never repay it. And so the king goes to the slave or the servant and he calls his debt and says, "You need to pay me back." And that servant looks at him and says, "Oh, king, I don't have the money, but I'll do whatever I can to pay you back. I promise I will work hard. I will do all of that." And the king looks at him and says, "You know what?

Just forget about it. You don't owe me anything." And you get tingles just thinking about that like, "Whoa, he just forgave them of a debt that he could never repay. How much joy should this person have? How much mercy should this person want to show others because of what has been done for him?" And yet in the story we read about this servant that is forgiven of this great debt. And he goes, and he finds a servant that is under him, and that servant owes him a few bucks, a few dollars.

And he says, "Hey, man, pay me back what you owe me." And the servant says to him, "I'm sorry. I just don't have it right now. You know Life is tight. I'm trying to pay everything. I can't pay it." What should that response have been? You know what? Forget about it. I have been forgiven so much, I will forgive you, but instead in the story, this first servant has that other one put in jail and says, "You will remain there until you can pay me back that debt of a few dollars." And all of us hear that story and go, "What a moron. How could he do that?

What is he thinking?" And that's the whole point of the story. Because even though we would look at that and say, "How foolish." Again, God puts up the mirror and it's like, "Oh, no, it's me again. I am the man in that story. God has forgiven me of so much. He has offered me so much grace, so much mercy. The very least that I can do in what God asks of me in return is to allow that mercy that He has given me to flow through me to others." That's what it means to love mercy.

And then He says that He wants us to walk humbly, to walk humbly. This is truly going through life recognizing who God is and in comparison who I am. That will bring me back to His mercy, that will bring me back to His grace and to His forgiveness. That I recognize every good thing does come from Him. It's not because I've earned it. It's not because I've deserved it. It's not because I've done anything great, but it's simply because of who God is.

So what does God ask in return for the many gifts and blessings that He has given to us? He asks that we would give those in return to others. Isn't that amazing? He doesn't ask for anything back personally. I tried to think of an example of what this would be like. It would be like somebody in my life who gives me an extravagant gift that I could never afford. I don't want to give any examples because we all have whatever it is, but just an extravagant gift. I'm never going to earn that much money. It's a different tax bracket.

It's crazy. And that person gives me that gift and says, "Here, I am giving this to you, and I'll pay the property taxes or whatever it is." Like, "You don't have to worry about it. I'll take care of it." So you can just enjoy it. And my response to that person would be, "What can I do in return? How could I ever possibly pay you back? What

can I do to thank you for this?" And that person looks at me and says, "You know, I only ask that you would be generous to others as well. Since I've given this to you, just be generous to others. I know you can't give a gift like this, but you could give other gifts along the way.

That's what I want you to do." And that person truly means it. We have people that say that to us and we're like, "Oh, no, they still want something back." No, they really mean it. I don't need anything. There's nothing you can give me that I can't get myself. So I want you to give to other people. That's what God is calling us to do as his followers. We don't have to go to church a bunch. We don't have to read the Bible enough. We don't have to pray enough. We don't have to do enough good deeds to try to repay God back for His mercy and grace. He simply asks that we would have that mercy and grace for others as well.

You don't have to give 10 Hail Marys. You don't have to go to the confessional booth. I'm not just going to pick on the Catholics. I'll pick on everybody, okay? You don't have to say, "Okay, God, I don't really enjoy reading the Bible, but I guess I'll do it. I'll suffer through it for you. I don't want to get up early and pray, but I owe you, so I'll go do it." That's not what it's about. God wants you to love others. That's how He wants this to play itself out. He has given us these blessings, these gifts, these good things. And what He wants in return is for us to simply love and give to others.

All right. I knew I was going to spend a lot of time on that verse. That's kind of like the main verse in Micah. It's awesome that we get this expectation of what God wants. So I'm going to real quickly just move through the rest of chapter 6, all right? Let's go to verse 9. Listen, the Lord is calling to the city and to fear your name is wisdom. Heed the rod and the one who appointed it. Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures, and the short ephah which is accursed?

Shall I acquit a man who has dishonest scales with a bag of false weights? For her rich people are violent, her people are liars, and their tongues speak deceitfully. Therefore, I have begun to destroy you and to ruin you because of your sins. So here are the consequences. You will eat but not be satisfied. Your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing. Because what you save, I will give to the sword. You will plant but not harvest.

You will press olives but not use the oil. You will crush grapes but not drink the wine. You have observed the statutes of Omri and the practices of Ahab's house. You have followed in their traditions. You have done all the evils they have done. Therefore, I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision and you will bear the scorn of the nations." Again, not a fun prophecy. The punishment for Israel's sins is on its way. He has witnessed their wickedness.

It's time for judgment. And I think that fear is an appropriate response when you know the Lord's judgment is coming. And he says, "That's the beginning of wisdom." Imagine the pit in their stomach. Let's move on to chapter 7, verse 1. Micah says, "What misery is mine? I am like one who goes to gather the summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard, and yet there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. For the godly have been swept from the land. Not one upright man remains.

All the men lie in wait to shed blood. Each hunts his brother with a net, his very own family. Both hands are skilled in doing evil. The ruler demands gifts and the judge accepts bribes. The powerful dictate what they desire. They all conspire together. The best of them. Even the best of them is like a Briar. The most upright is worse than a thorn hedge. For the day of your watchman has come, the day that God visits you, now is the time for their confusion.

Do not trust a neighbor. Do not put confidence even in a friend. Even with the woman who lies in your embrace. Guard the words of your lips. You can't trust anybody. For a son will dishonor his father. A daughter rises up against her mother. A daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the members of his own household. But as for me, Micah says, "I watch in hope for the Lord.

I wait for God my Savior, for my God will hear me." Here we get an image, a picture of what it looks like when you turn away from God and what the result is. You can't trust anybody. Have you ever been at a point in your life where you feel like you can't trust anybody? What an awful feeling. What a horrible picture. And yet, the enemy does such a good job of hiding that picture from us.

Because if we could see what a truly desolate city looked like, where there's no life, where everything is dead, everything is miserable, it would help us from being like, "Well, I don't want to go down that road, but the enemy hides that picture from us and lies to us and shows us instead a beautiful picture." But here we are traveling down this road. But Micah is not going to end there. He will end with a message of hope. Verse 18, Micah says, "Who is a God like you who pardons sins and forgives the transgressions of the remnant of his inheritance?"

For you do not stay angry forever, but you delight. You want to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us. You will tread our sins underfoot and you will hurl our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be faithful to Jacob, and you will show love to Abraham as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago. Micah ends with the good news that our God is a faithful God.

He will remain faithful to His covenant promises that He has made to us. Irregardless of our sins and the times that we turn away from Him, God will remain faithful. And so I encourage you, as you journey in this relationship with God, don't be burdened by your relationship with Him because of false expectations. Don't burden yourself with a list of to-dos to try to earn favor from God, but instead find rest and peace and comfort in knowing that He only desires that you would love others well.

God does not expect you or call you to live a miserable life. God wants you to live life to the fullest. John 10:10, I love that verse, right? God came to give you life, that you would live it to the full. God knows you can't possibly pay him back for all that He has given you. Instead, He wants you to extend that mercy and love to others. There still are consequences for our actions. That's true. But there is hope on the other side that as God forgives our sins, if we will remain faithful, that He will give us life and life everlasting.

And so I encourage you to be a person of integrity, to live in the hope that comes through Jesus Christ and to share that hope with others in the way you live. That is the only expectation upon your life as a Christ follower. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, you have been so gracious and so good to us. You have paid a debt that we could never repay. We can't give you enough in return to thank you for what you have given to us.

And so, Father, I pray that what we can do, we would do, that we would love others well, that we would offer forgiveness and grace and mercy to others because of what you have given to us. That we would act justly, that we would be concerned about the needs of others, that we would take care of those needs. Father, that we would live life humbly, recognizing that every good thing we have is from you. It has nothing to do with us.

It's not because we've earned it or deserved it. It is your gift of grace. And so we do our best to humbly come before you, offering all we can, and that is our praise. It's in Jesus' name, amen.