

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

Micah | *Who is a God Like You?*

North Center | April 17, 2022 (Resurrection Sunday)

Pastor Jeremiah Knoop

Today, we join untold thousands of churches all across the globe in celebrating the most important day in human history: **Resurrection Sunday**.

At the center of human history, there stands a **cross** and an **empty tomb**.

- As a church, we have spent the last 31 Sundays looking at 31 books in the **Old Testament**, and every book we have studied so far has been *pointing forward* to death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
 - God intended for every story, every promise, every character, every word...to point forward to the Messiah who would give His life on a cross and then rise from the grave 3 days later.
- And when we finally begin the **New Testament** this summer, we will see that everything (every story, every promise, every journey, every victory, every hardship) is *pointing backwards* to the cross and the resurrection of Jesus.

In many churches, Resurrection Sunday is the most well-attended Sunday of the year. For one reason or another, people who don't attend another other church gathering throughout the year will show up on Resurrection Sunday.

III. I remember, several years after I had been pastoring a church in a small town in Nebraska, I was talking to somebody in the community, and I asked him if he was part of a church family. He said, "Yeah, I go to the Baptist church." Now, there was only one Baptist church in area, and I was the pastor. And I never saw this guy in our Sunday Gatherings – except for maybe once during the Christmas season and on Easter.

Perhaps, there are some here this morning who have a similar view of the local church. You come during the Christian holidays because it feels like an important part of the Holiday celebrations, but you don't really have time for the church gathering the other 50 Sundays of the year...

If that's you, I want to say two things:

1. First, we are so glad you are here!
2. Second, our hope this morning is that you would fall in love with Jesus; that you experience His presence; that you would see that He is so much more than a holiday icon. We are praying that He would make Himself known to you today as the one whose virgin birth, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection changed the course of history forever.

Our desire is not to entertain you this morning. Nothing about this gathering is meant to be a show or a performance or a religious experience. Our desire this Sunday is the same as it is every Sunday: (1) to treasure Christ together, (2) to encourage one another in our relationship with Jesus, and (3) to be better equipped to take the good news of Jesus back into our homes, into our workplaces, into our communities, and across the globe.

We read about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in the first 4 books of the New Testament (called the Gospels), but this morning we are going to rewind over 500 years before the death & resurrection of Jesus; and we're going to let the prophet Micah teach us about this most important moment in human history.

Why Micah?

1. Well, if you are one of those who attends a gathering like this only during the holidays, then it's kind of like jumping into the story halfway through –
 - like reading the end of a book before you've read the first half.
 - If you're an "Easter Sunday attender," then you've almost certainly heard the story of the cross and the resurrection, but perhaps you have never heard the story of why there had to be a cross in the first place.

The Prophet Micah helps put this day in **perspective**.

Micah helps us see:

1. Why this world needed a Savior
2. What Jesus would suffer as He rescued us from our sin.
3. That death could not hold Him
 - a. That the grave could not keep Him
 - b. That Satan could not beat Him
 - c. That our sin could not hinder Him
 - d. That no power on earth could stop Him
4. That King Jesus will reign forever
5. How we are to respond the Gospel of Jesus

The resurrection doesn't just give us a holiday to celebrate. It gives us a reason to live.

The resurrection gives us a reason to live.

The resurrection isn't the climax of a good story; it's the beginning of a brand new life.

God doesn't just want you to celebrate the resurrection; He is calling you to respond to it.

There is a way that God calls us to live that is empowered through the resurrection, and Micah tells us what that is.

2. The second reason we are turning to Micah as we celebrate the resurrection is because we are on a journey through the entire Bible – from start to finish. Each Sunday we look at the next book, and (in His sovereignty) the Lord has brought us to **Micah** this morning.

PRAY

CONTEXT:

As we have gone through the OT during the past 33 weeks, we have seen a **HISTORY** of God's people from **creation** – to their rescue from **Egypt** – to their victories & economic success in the **Promise Land** – to the **division** of the land into 2 kingdoms (North/Samaria & South/Jerusalem) – to the destruction & **captivity** of both kingdoms – and finally to God **rescuing** His people from Babylon and bringing them back home.

We've seen epic battles.¹ We've seen victory and defeat.² We've seen stories of love and romance.³ We've seen stories that make us laugh⁴ and stories that make us weep.⁵ We've seen stories that fill us with hope,⁶ and then we've seen stories that fill us with questions.⁷

And in all that we have seen, there has never been a moment where God has abandoned His people. He has been faithful to them every step of the way.⁸ God has never forsaken His people, and He never will.⁹

BUT we have also seen that God's people turn their backs on Him all the time. And so we have seen God send messengers (called prophets) to Israel (in the North) and to Judah (in the South) calling God's people to turn to Him. These prophets also warned God's people of what would happen if they continued to rebel against Him. And **Micah** is one of those prophets, and God gave Micah a message that was meant for both kingdoms – it was meant for all of the God's people.

The same is true for the message of the cross & the empty tomb.

- When Jesus died, the sin of all His people died with Him.
- All when Jesus rose from the dead, His victory became our victory.
 - If you have given your life to Jesus, then His story is your story.
 - Sin has no power of you.
 - The sting of death is gone.
 - Satan has been defeated.
 - We have the life of Jesus beating in our hearts.
 - And we will live with Him forever.

So, Micah comes with a message for all of God's people, and we can sum up his message like this:

1. Humanity's **rebellion** | *all of us have rebelled against God.*
2. God's **remedy** | *instead of destroying us, God sent a Savior to take our place.*¹⁰
3. Christ's **reign** | *our Savior would be victorious in His suffering and reign forever.*
4. Our **response** | *the most important question is how we respond to the risen King.*

1. **Our rebellion** | All of us have rebelled against God...

God created us to be in relationship with Him, and since the very beginning of our story (in **Genesis 3**), every human being has rebelled against God.

¹ E.g., David & Goliath.

² E.g., the victory at Jericho & the defeat at Ai.

³ E.g., Jacob & Rachel; Boaz & Ruth; Esther & the King of Persia; the Song of Solomon.

⁴ E.g., Esther.

⁵ E.g., Jeremiah; Lamentations; Hosea.

⁶ E.g., the story of dry bones becoming flesh (Ezekiel).

⁷ E.g., the suffering in Job or the apocalyptic chapters in Daniel.

⁸ **Micah 6:3–5**.

⁹ Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5.

¹⁰ God's **righteousness** | *God is righteous, and so He must deal with our sin.*

- When we talk about “sin,” that’s what we mean. It’s not just all the bad things that we do; it’s every moment that we turn away from God. Every time we **think** something – or **do** something – or **want** something that is against the heart of God...it’s called sin. And Micah makes clear that, apart from God, all of us are sinners.

The faithful man has perished from the earth
 And there is **no one upright among men**...
 ~ **Micah 7:2**

- Then Micah goes on to describe just how wicked and rebellious people are.

...they...successfully do evil **with both hands**...
 ~ **Micah 7:3**

- That’s like saying that they are using all of their resources to do evil against their God. And everybody is like this.¹¹

And the Bible tells us that this is the way it’s always been. In his letter to the church in Rome, the Apostle Paul asks the question, “*Is there something that makes one person better than another in God’s eyes?*” (**Romans 3:9**). Paul writes...

Not at all.
 For we have previously [said that we] are **all** under sin.
 As it written:
 There is **none righteous**, no, **not one**;
 There is **none** who understands;
 There is **none** who seeks after God...
 ~ **Romans 3:10–11**

- Not only have every single one of us rebelled against God, but the Bible says that the price of our rebellion is death.

For the wages of sin is death...
 ~ **Romans 6:23**

- Not just physical death at the end of our time here on Earth, but a spiritual death which separates us from God for all eternity.
- And to make matters even worse, this is problem that we have no way of fixing.

...her wounds are incurable...
 ~ **Micah 1:9**

¹¹ “Woe to those who **devise** iniquity, and **work out** evil on their beds! At morning light they **practice** it, *because* it is in the power of their hand” (**Micah 2:1**). Micah says, these people have sinful **thoughts** throughout the day – and then (as they’re lying on their beds at night) they **plan** how they can get away with it – and then in the morning, they **practice** it. They rejected God’s prophets (**2:6**), and the spiritual shepherds were leading in the rebellion (**3:1–5**).

- There is nothing we can do to fix our sin problem.
 - There are many people who think that God will welcome them into His presence because of all the good things that they've done, but that isn't the way sin works.
 - **Sin is like mixing poison into a glass of water.** Even if there's only a drop of poison mixed into the water, the entire drink is destroyed.
 - It doesn't matter how many good things you have done in your life, your heart has been poisoned by sin, and it's going to die – unless God does something with the poison in your heart.
 - There would be no hope for your heart or your eternity unless God does something to deal with your sin.

And because God loves His people with an everlasting love, He's going to deal with our sin. Micah tells us that God is going to come down and deal with their sin.

For behold, **the LORD is coming out of His place;**
He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.
 The mountains will melt under Him,
 And the valleys will split like wax before the fire,
 Like waters poured down a steep place.
 All this for the **transgression** of Jacob and for the **sins** of the house of Israel...
 ~ **Micah 1:3–5**

“**I'm coming down!**” Now when I hear Micah say that God is coming down to deal with our sin, my mind immediately goes back to my childhood days.

- My room was in the basement. So, when I did something that I wasn't supposed to do (which happened all the time), my dad would “come down” to deal with the situation.
- “Go to your room, and I'll be down in a minute!” That was not happy news 😊

These people are rebels to the bone, and God says I'm coming down.

- *How should that make them feel?*
- *What is He going to do when He gets here?*
- *How is He going to deal with their sin... especially if their sin is incurable?*¹²

Well, in the **IMMEDIATE CONTEXT**, God deals with their sin by destroying their sin capitals (Samaria & Jerusalem) and then by sending the Northern Kingdom into captivity in Assyria and by sending the Southern Kingdom into captivity in Babylon.

Therefore thus says the LORD:
 Behold, against this family **I am devising disaster,**¹³
 From which you cannot remove your necks;
 Nor shall you walk haughtily,
 For this is an evil time.¹⁴
 ~ **Micah 2:3**

¹² How do you deal with a cancer patient if the cancer is incurable?

¹³ You devise rebellion; therefore, I devise disaster.

¹⁴ See also: **Micah 3:12; 5:10–15.**

That was just and right and good and even loving for God to do that. God wants His people to know that He always does what is right (**Micah 6:5**), and that means that He must deal with our sin.¹⁵

- If God did not punish sin, He would not be just. He would not be righteous.
- If God ignored our sin, He would not be good or loving.

Every time my dad would discipline me when I was growing up, he would say, “*I’m doing this because I love you.*” And I didn’t like it, but I knew that it was true.

It was good and just and right and loving for God to deal with His people’s sinful, rebellious hearts by destroying their cities and sending them into captivity.

BUT it didn’t actually do anything about their sin problem.

- We’ve already seen how the story of their captivity ends.
- God frees them from their captivity, brings them back home, restores their lives...
- And they fall right back into old patterns of sin and rebellion.

But that shouldn’t surprise us because Micah had already told them that their sin condition was “incurable” (**1:9**).

Q. So, what is God going to do to deal with their incurable sin problem?

2. **God’s remedy** | *instead of destroying us, God sent a Savior to take our place.*

But you, **Bethlehem** Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me **the One Ruler in Israel**,
Whose goings forth are from old, **from everlasting**.

~ **Micah 5:2**

God gives His people a promise that, one day, someone would be born in Bethlehem, but this person would have no beginning.

- He would be from Bethlehem,
- And He would be from everlasting.

Q. And what will this person do?

A. He will do something that has never been done before. He will destroy the power of sin forever.

¹⁵ God does not delight in judgment. Rather, God has demonstrated (over and over again) how much He delights in rescuing His people from judgment. Many people ask, “If God is love, why is there so much evil and suffering in the world?” The **better question** is this: if God is holy and righteous, why does this world still exist in the first place? If all of humanity has rebelled against God, why has He been so patient with you and me in our sin? As you study the history of God’s relationship with His sinful people, the most astounding thing we continue to see is not the severity of God’s punishment but His unrelenting love for us. God DELIGHTS in showing mercy.

Who is a God like You,¹⁶

Pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?

He does not retain His anger forever.

Because **He delights in mercy**. He will again have **compassion** on us.

And will **subdue** our iniquities. **You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.**

~ **Micah 7:18-19**

Q. And **how** would this person from Bethlehem (and from everlasting) cast our sins away?

A. *Through suffering.*

At the end of the first verse in chapter 5, Micah says...

...**They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.**

~ **Micah 5:1**

The picture wasn't crystal clear for Micah, but he could see the outline of the gospel!

- Someone would be born in Bethlehem, but this someone had no beginning.
- He would cast away our sin forever.
- And He would suffer in the process.

And over 500 years later, the New Testament writers looked back on the book of Micah, and they said, "Look, all of this is describing Jesus."

- He was the one who was born in Bethlehem (**Matt. 2:6**)
- He is the One who has no beginning (**John 1:1-3**)
- He was the one who cast away our sin forever.¹⁷
- He was the one whose face was beaten with a rod (**Matt. 27:30; Mark 15:19**)
 - And that was just the beginning of His suffering.

JESUS SUFFERING:

- He would also be abandoned by His followers
- He would be stripped & whipped to the razor edge of death
- He would have a plant of thorns twisted into a circle and then shoved onto His head
- He would be forced to carry the cross beam of his cross and then paraded through the streets of Jerusalem like a criminal
- He would have spikes driven through His wrists and through His feet
- And then He would be displayed on a hill called Golgotha outside Jerusalem where He would struggle for oxygen until He finally surrendered His life to death.
- After He breathed his last, the Roman soldiers would shove a spear into His side.
- And then His body would be buried in a tomb; a heavy stone would cover the entrance; as the Savior's body lay lifeless and alone, surrounded by darkness in a tomb.¹⁸

Micah only glimpsed the beginning of Jesus' suffering.

BUT He also glimpsed the end of Jesus' suffering.

¹⁶ Micah's name literally means, "Who is like God?"

¹⁷ E.g., Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 15:55-58.

¹⁸ **Q.** What was Jesus doing? **A.** He was drinking the poison in our cup full of sin.

3. **Christ's reign** | *our Savior would be victorious in His suffering & He would reign forever*

In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the lame,
I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted;
I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation;
So the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion **from now on, even forever**.¹⁹
~ **Micah 4:6-7**

Micah saw that the Savior would suffering, and indeed Jesus did suffer.
But Micah also saw that the Savior would reign forever, and that is what we celebrate today!

After three days in the tomb, God raised Jesus from the dead.

- Victorious over sin.
- Conquering death.
- Defeating Satan.

And the Bible says that God has “**highly exalted Him** and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father**” (**Philippians 2:9-11**).

Jesus Christ IS Lord.

Jesus Christ IS King.

Jesus Christ IS reigning now.

And what matters more than anything else in the world is how to respond to Him today.

4. **Our response** | *the most important question is how you & I will respond to the risen King*

He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?
~ **Micah 6:8**

On the cross, Jesus showed us what it means for God to do justly.

On the cross, Jesus showed us what it means for God to love mercy.

On the cross, Jesus showed us what it means to walk humbly with our God.

The greatest tragedy of Easter Sunday is how many people will hear the gospel of the risen King, and then walk away from Him. This day isn't just a celebration; it's not just a holiday; it is your life! **Q.** What does God want from you? **A.** He wants a relationship. Justice & mercy came together at the cross. Justice for sin; mercy for the sinner. And now, what does God require: that we walk humbly with Him. He wants a relationship with you. Not just a prayer. Not just a baptism. Not just a commitment to your local church. He wants a relationship through His Son.

¹⁹ See also **Micah 2:12**.