

Hope for the Future Shapes Your Life Today Micah 4:1-13

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Have you heard the term “doomscrolling” or “doomsurfing?” These terms have been coined in our digital news age to refer to people who spend hours online scrolling or surfing through bad news. One author commented on how this behavior can trap us in a vicious cycle of negativity.

“Our minds are wired to look out for threats. The more time we spend scrolling, the more we find those dangers, the more we get sucked into them, the more anxious we get. Now you look around yourself, and everything feels gloomy, everything makes you anxious.” This doomscrolling habit forms what the author calls a “dark filter” on how you see the world.

If you have read through the minor prophets, you might feel a bit like you are doomscrolling the Bible. After all, these books are filled with messages of God’s judgment upon his wayward people. The first three chapters of Micah have been largely messages of doom for the people of Judah because of their idolatry and injustice.

The bad news in Micah is real. The threats of judgment are deserved. The idolatry and injustice of the people are well-documented.

But it is critical for us to recognize that the message of Micah, and by extension all the prophets, is not just a message of doom. It is also a message of hope. So, today, we are going to do some hopescrolling through Micah. Chapter four shifts our focus to a message of hope. Micah describes an ideal future that God promises to his people. It is a future of restoration, peace, redemption, and victory. It is a drastic contrast to the present circumstances of judgment, pain, and destruction.

We are going to see how the message of future hope actually shapes the life we live today. Will you notice with me three ways that future hope shapes our lives today.

I. Hope for the future springs from the promises of God for our ultimate good.

A. God’s promises to reverse the circumstances of his people for good.

1. The destroyed mountain of God will be raised as the highest mountain (3:12, 4:1-4).
 - a. In the latter days God will restore Jerusalem and the temple mount.
 - b. The nations will flow to it to learn the ways of God as his law goes forth.
 - c. The Lord will judge the nations from his capitol city.
 - d. The Lord will bring peace and security.
2. The weak, wounded, and scattered people will be gathered as a remnant of God’s people under the care of the Shepherd-King (4:6-8).
3. The distressed and exiled people of God will be rescued and redeemed from their exile (4:9-10).
4. The besieged people of God will have victory over their enemies (4:11-13).

- B. Hope is the certain anticipation of the fulfillment of these promises by God's power.
1. The way things are now is not the way they will always be. God has promised a future of restoration, peace, and security for his people.
 2. These promises are certain because the mouth of the Lord has spoken it (v. 4). Paul says it like this in Titus 1:2-3: *in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior...*

The question we all want answered is "when is this going to happen?" Of course, that is an important question. In my view, Micah pictures a situation after the return of Christ when his kingdom has been established and he reigns as King over the world. How else could there be world peace and the dominance of God's law as the guiding standard for human interaction?

But in our curiosity about the timing of these events, I don't want us to lose focus on why Micah writes these things in the first place. He writes to infuse the people of God with a sustaining sense of hope in the promises of God for their ultimate good.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*,
We are very shy nowadays of even mentioning Heaven. We are afraid of the jeer about "pie in the sky," and of being told that we are trying to "escape from the duty of making a happy world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere."

But either there is "pie in the sky" or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no.

Friends, these promises are real. The world Micah describes is not a dream. It is not a wish. It is a promise from Almighty God. Such promises of God's ultimately good purposes for his people are intended to give us a proper perspective on reality.

The promise of this future world of peace and righteousness and restoration is not intended to make us check out of this present world. It is intended to make us check in. How? That brings us to the second way future hope shapes our lives today.

II. Hope for the future stimulates faithful living today (v. 5).

- A. The nations that will one day walk in God's ways, now walk in their own ways.
1. Verse 5 brings us back to the present.
 2. At present, those nations walk in the name of their pagan gods.
- B. Energized by the promise of the future, God's people live now in his name.
1. Walk is a lifestyle term. It has been explained as trust in, obey, be loyal to, live by, follow, live in conformity to the will and character of, give allegiance to...
 2. It is the commitment of the people of God to worship and faithfully follow the Lord as they wait for the fulfillment of his promised future.

C. Consider how the NT makes this point.

2 Peter 3:11-13

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

1 John 3:2-3

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

At the 2002 Winter Olympics American Apolo Ohno hoped to win his second gold medal in the men's 5,000-meter short track speed-skating relay. During one of the turns, an American skater fell but quickly got back into the race. While the fall and recovery only took a few seconds, it essentially put the American team out of the race. What was interesting was that the American team began to skate slower and slower, eventually being lapped by the gold-medal Canadians. Why did they slow down? They lost hope.

But there is a big difference between our hope and the hope of the Olympic skate team. Their hope was rooted in their performance. If they performed well, they could hope to win. Our hope is not rooted in our performance that is uncertain. Our hope is rooted in God's promise which is unbreakably solid.

So, hope that is grounded in God's good promises for our future in his kingdom energizes us to live faithful lives as we wait for the fulfillment of those promises. We don't have to disengage, give in to despair, or live in a fog of disillusionment. We pursue a life of worship and obedience to God in honor of his name. Even when things are falling apart all around us, our hope keeps us centered on glorifying God by living a faithful life.

III. Hope for the future strengthens us in our present sufferings (vv. 11-12).

- A. God's people will experience suffering as they await the fulfillment of God's promise.
 1. They cry aloud because their king is not with them (v. 9).
 2. They writhe and groan like a woman in labor pains because of their present sufferings (vv. 9-10). In their case, it was the suffering of conquest and exile. Nations assembled against them to defile their city (v. 11).
 3. God's promise is not to insulate us from suffering. Suffering is a reality of the Christian life that cannot be escaped.
 - a. Romans 8:18-22 reminds us that we live in a fallen world that groans under the curse of sin. Suffering is a result of living in such a world.
 - b. John 15:20 reminds us that Jesus said the world would treat his followers the way they treated him. We will suffer as disciples.
 - c. 1 Peter 4:12 reminds us not to think it strange when we suffer as though something unusual were happening. All Christians suffer.

B. God's plans and promises for our future strengthen us in suffering.

1. Notice v. 12. God's plans for his people are to reverse their suffering and one day turn it into ultimate victory.
2. Knowing that God's promises and plans are for our ultimate good, we endure suffering. We are strengthened by the promises and plans of God.

Perhaps the illustration of childbirth used in vv. 9-10 is a good way to support this idea. Today is mother's day and a number of the women present here today have been through the experience of childbirth. I have witnessed this at the birth of my own children. It appeared to be quite painful. Seriously, there is an extended experience of intense pain. Why would anyone endure such pain? Because of the joy that follows it. On the other side of this pain, there is new life. There is joy and rejoicing and blessing.

God's promise of a future kingdom and eternal blessing with him functions in a similar way. It sustains us through the pain of suffering. It reminds us that on the other side of our suffering is an eternal experience of unrelenting joy and eternal fulfillment.

How do we endure our exile? By knowing that there is a future redemption and return from exile. How do we endure our pain? By knowing that we are going to a kingdom where there is no pain. How do we endure our sorrows? By knowing that where God is bringing us, there will be no sorrow. How do we live faithfully in a world where everything is broken and out of alignment? By remembering that God will bring us to a world where everything is restored and whole.

Conclusion

Do you remember these words?

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth. Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide.
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Blessings all mine and ten thousand beside.
Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I
have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness Lord unto me.*

Those are words sung by people who have hope in the living God and his promises for their future. Do you have such hope? It is found in Jesus Christ.

Jesus died on the cross for hopeless sinners like us. He rose from the dead to secure hope of eternal life for all who trust in him. When you turn from your sin and trust in Jesus Christ, you get an infusion of hope. He forgives your sin. He makes you a new creation. He gives you a new identity as a child of God. Your future is forever secured because you are united to Jesus by faith. And that relationship with Jesus stabilizes your life through all the hardships and experiences of suffering until you are finally home with him in his kingdom.

Is there pie in the sky? Yes. But there is also help for the here-and-now when you know and trust Jesus Christ. Will you trust in him today?