

PULPIT DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP



*Gray & Gold by Jack Rogers Cox;
3' by 5'; Oil on canvas; 1942; The Cleveland Museum of Art.*

A study of the book of Micah

The Incomparable God: A Story of Forgiveness & Fidelity

Purpose of Micah

“To call Judah to repentance and hope during the Assyrian crisis and to prepare Judah for the Babylonian exile by announcing God’s judgements against sin and his promise of restoration.”

-Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible

September 12, 2021

"THE TEST"

Micah 3:5-8 ESV

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths. Therefore, it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God. But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin

Historical Context

Historical context – In Micah's day, if you wanted a prophet to say something good about your or the circumstances, you would just pay them...and those who fed them with finances, they would proclaim peace to. In describing this situation, one author writes: "What the prophets around the city had to say, both publicly and privately, depended on the way they were treated by their listeners. If money was present, they would proclaim 'peace' – all smoothness and approval...if money wasn't present, they would declare war against you and offer no spiritual solace whatsoever". In essence, the message got flipped upside down...the ones that needed to hear about God's judgment, were given words of peace...and the ones that needed to hear about God's peace, were given judgment.

Big Idea

If false teachers are a danger to themselves and those around them, let the church look to those pastors who are most committed to the purity of their proclamation not the production of their prominence.

In other words: When those called to speak for God don't speak against sin, they are a dangerous to be around.

Outline

1. The Nature and Message of the False Prophets

2. The Danger of False Prophets

3. The Message of Faithful Prophets

GOSPEL APPLICATIONS:

Praise to Jesus - Praise for Jesus Christ, who as our friend, has declared to us the purity of the Father's words to us...and that as the great Shepherd of the church, he raises up pastors who faithfully proclaim the power of the Gospel, in the Spirit, and with justice.

Repentance through Jesus – Repentance for the many times we surround ourselves with people who tell us what we want to hear and not what we need to hear...for our rebellion against God in ignoring the depth of our sin.

Consecration for Jesus – Commit to surrounding ourselves with friends who seek to both encourage and exhort us to holy living in Jesus and for Jesus...and to place ourselves under pastors who are our friend because they preach both the forgiveness of sin and the need to turn from it.

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Deuteronomy 18:15-22 gives more clarity as to who were legitimate prophets of God. From the sermon we hear, "When those called to speak for God don't speak against sin, they are a dangerous to be around." Who are the modern-day people who are called to speak for God into our lives today?

2. While it may be profitable to name specific false prophets (especially if these are the teachers of the good folks in our homes or in our neighborhoods); it may be as helpful to think about and discuss the messages we hear preached from a myriad of false prophets. How do we identify these false prophets? Pasted below are two quotations to help.

"Good sermons, far from making people comfortable in the midst of life's problems, make people uncomfortable with their sin." – Erik McKiddie

"So the prophets, Jesus, the apostles — this is the way they preach. They named sins and they denounced them, and they called for repentance and obedience in the power of the glorious good news of forgiveness that they preached. So if a pastor wants to find an authority for preaching that does not name and denounce and call for repentance from sins, he's not going to find it in the Bible." - John Piper

What are the messages modern false prophets are preaching? What are the sources of these messages? How are these messages dangerous? Why do we listen to them?

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

3. The root word for vision means to see...prophets are meant to see clearly where and what God is calling his people to...without that clarity there is darkness...and with darkness comes consequences.

There is a parallel between the prophets and the people of ancient Israel and the godly friends in our lives today. Who are the people in our lives whom God has placed to speak truth to us? How can we be true prophets to one another? What can get in the way of proclaiming the truth? What can keep us from listening?

4. From the sermon, "But praise be to God, that in every generation, God raises up leaders who are faithfully committed to proclaiming God's word in its purity, despite what it cost them". What are the marks of a faithful pastor/leader? How does a pastor's view of the authority and authenticity of the Bible verify his words? In addition to the Word, upon who else does a faithful pastor lean (John 14:26)? Faithful preaching is marked by what?

Praise to Jesus: In morning hours, this week why not offer praise to Jesus Christ, who as our friend, has declared to us the purity of the Father's words to us...and that as the great Shepherd of the church, he raises up pastors who faithfully proclaim the power of the Gospel, in the Spirit, and with justice. Perhaps take a moment to pray for our pastors and if led send a note of encouragement.

Repentance through Jesus: Perhaps during the noonday hour, pause for a moment of repentance for the many times we surround ourselves with people who tell us what we want to hear and not what we need to hear...for our rebellion against God in ignoring the depth of our sin.

Consecration for Jesus: At evening prayer time, why not reflect on Christian friends? Offer prayers to commit to surrounding ourselves with friends who seek to both encourage and exhort us to holy living in Jesus and for Jesus...and to place ourselves under pastors who are our friend because they preach both the forgiveness of sin and the need to turn from it.

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH DISCUSSION

For Families and Young Children

If you want to connect with our family ministries, contact Pastor Ken (kenc@fpcrome.org)

1. Play a game of Follow-the-Leader with your children. Make sure you are the first leader and tell them that you will lead them to the kitchen from the family room. But instead of leading them to the kitchen lead them to another room in the house. Ask them if you were a good leader or not.

- a. Talk with your children about the false prophets during Micah's time that were not leading the people to God but away from God. Micah 3:5 says that these false prophets "lead my people astray".
- b. You can take turns playing Follow-the-Leader and let them have turns being a good leader or bad leader.

2. Micah describes God's judgment against these false prophets in verse 6 as "night" and "darkness". In other words, God will not shine His light on these teachers so that they will not be able to know God's Word or will.

- a. Go to a dark room or closet with your children. Bring a flashlight and give the children turns with the flashlight. Take turns guessing how many fingers the person with flashlight is holding up when they have the flashlight on and when it is off. Talk about how difficult it is to see when the flashlight is off.
- b. Read Psalm 119:105 and ask your children what this verse tells us about God's Word.

3. Ask your children how we can tell the difference between a true teacher/preacher with a false teacher/preacher. Talk with them about how the Bible is our standard on this since it is God's Word.

- a. Read Micah 3:8 and talk about the description of Micah as a true prophet.
- b. Read Acts 17:11 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 talk about how we should use God's Word to determine true vs false teaching.

4. Take time to pray with your children for our pastors and teachers at the church that they may be grounded in the Bible and exalt Christ in all sermons and classes.

Scriptures for further study: John 5:39-40, Luke 24:13-35, 2 Timothy 4:2-4

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH DISCUSSION

For Students

If you want to connect with our student ministries, contact Student Ministry Director Jimmy (jimmyl@fpcrome.org)

1. The term “lead astray” in verse 5 refers to being misled by the prophets into error rather than provide right guidance. Pastor and reformer John Calvin writes, “For anyone who flatters sinners and allows them to sleep in their filth, while at the same time encouraging them to believe that all is well, is a seducer of souls.” What does Calvin mean by someone who flatters sinners? What kind of person is he describing?

2. What mistaken views of power and influence have you seen, in your own life or in the lives of those around you?

3. What privileges do you enjoy, and what power does that bring you?

4. What would it look like for you to use that power for the good of others, rather than for your own gain?

5. Think about something you can use at your expense for someone else’s good and then use it that way. As God’s people, we are freed to give what we would otherwise seek to grasp, and to give up what we once strived to get.

6. Throughout this passage and elsewhere Micah is calling out the abuse of power that he sees around him. Look at verse 8 again. How is Micah an embodiment of the proper use of power? Where does his power come from?

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH DISCUSSION

For Non Believers or New Believers

If you want to know more about Jesus and Christianity, contact Pastor Jonathan (jonathans@fpcrome.org)

1. It seems these days people in our society have become increasingly cynical about which voices or which authorities (if any) to trust? To some extent this may have reached an unhealthy level of distrust. However, our passage does remind us that we need to be cautious, especially when it comes to those who claim to speak authoritatively for the Lord. Remember, the only sure and certain authority for us is God's Word, which is always "trustworthy and true" (Revelation 21:5).
2. Our passage speaks strongly against false prophets, whom one scholar refers to as "placebo preachers". By contrast, look at Micah 3:8. What are the characteristics of someone who is truly representing God and His Word? See also Acts 4:13.
3. Read 2 Timothy 3:16 – 4:5 Note the multiple purposes of God's Word in our lives (3:16-17). Note the qualities of those who preach God's Word faithfully (4:2). Are you submitting yourself to the authority of God's Word? Why is it that some people refuse to submit to sound doctrine? (see 4:3-4)
4. Proverbs 29:18 states that without God's revelation, the people become unrestrained. Why is the absence of God's Word, or the abandoning of God's Word, fatal to people?
5. Sometimes non-believers will say, "I just don't believe in the Bible." But when we probe a bit further, we often discover that they have never actually read the Bible. Have you? Would you take the time to read the Bible, or at least start by reading one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.