

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 19, 2021

“THE GREATEST PROPHET”

Micah 3:9-12 ESV

9 Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, **10** who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. **11** Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the Lord and say, “Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.” **12** Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

Historical Context

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.” - Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

What Dickens portrays about the cities of London and Paris harkens back to what the prophet Micah had to say to Samaria and Jerusalem. Micah prophesied in Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, at about the same time as Isaiah.

“A shocking contrast between extreme wealth and poverty was exacerbated by egregious injustices on the part of the elite rich and ruling class against the stalwart landowners, who were driven off their land and into a dependent economic status. Dishonest practices prevailed everywhere since the judges were venal and the poor had no redress. Moral corruption was so rife that it even debauched the nations' religious leaders. Gifted prophets and educated priests prostituted themselves for their elite pimps.”

- Donald J. Wiseman, T. Desmond Alexander, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah and Micah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 151.

Big Idea

The perversion of justice and power will be judged severely in God's economy, therefore let the church place their trust in Christ alone, the greatest prophet who gave up power to absorb the judgement of God in our stead.

Outline

1. Abuses described

2. Abuses exposed

3. Abuses punished

GOSPEL APPLICATIONS:

Praise to Jesus - Look beyond Micah, to the greatest prophet Jesus. The One who was a victim of heinous abuses of power by both religious and political leaders of His day. The One who gave up His power and absorbed the judgement of God in their stead.

Repentance through Jesus – Turn from your sin and look to Jesus for salvation. We are either denying our sin to ourselves and hiding it from others, or we are admitting its presence to ourselves and confessing it to others.

Consecration for Jesus – To the degree that we have power, rank and privilege, we have power – but we also, to that same degree, have the responsibility to act as stewards of it. Commit to be a steward leader in the name of Christ Jesus. Only when we understand the gospel of what Jesus has done – how He gave up the privilege of His power, how He used power properly in order to benefit us – are we able to live as steward leaders.

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. Only in the context of true worship can we hope for power to flow through us without having dominion over us. In true worship to Jesus, we loosen our grip on power, and power loses its grip on us. How does trusting in the One who gave up everything for us proclaim the true story of power?

2. In what ways could we possibly be misusing our power and privilege for personal gain, while minimizing and demeaning others who have less rank and fewer resources? Is there a possibility that we are not stewarding well the resources and gifts that God has given to us?

3. Think about your own power and privilege you possess in your work context, living situation, neighborhood and family. How can you let the gospel shape and inform the way you steward that power and privilege?

4. How does this passage prompt or encourage you to pray for leaders in your community, country and abroad?

5. Our God is about renewal and restoration. A God of justice and mercy. Can you see how God is doing this in your own life? Can you look back on times when He has done this for you in the past?

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

Praise to Jesus: Reflect: Look beyond Micah, to the greatest prophet Jesus. The One who was a victim of heinous abuses of power by both religious and political leaders of His day. The One who gave up His power and absorbed the judgement of God in their stead.

Each morning: Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you to praise to Jesus for receiving for us the punishment we deserve. Also, consider offering praise to the Lord for the reality that justice is still a concept at all. Without Jesus, the value of justice wouldn't exist.

Repentance through Jesus: Reflect: Turn from your sin and look to Jesus for salvation. We are either denying our sin to ourselves and hiding it from others, or we are admitting its presence to ourselves and confessing it to others.

Pray: In verse 3:8 Micah testifies to the reality that he is filled with power, with the Holy Spirit. The spirit of the Lord reveals sin and leads us to repentance.

At midday: Ask the Lord to reveal any areas of life where sin still reigns. Confess these to the Lord.

Consecration for Jesus: Reflect: To the degree that we have power, rank and privilege, we have power – but we also, to that same degree, have the responsibility to act as stewards of it. Commit to be a steward leader in the name of Christ Jesus. Only when we understand the gospel of what Jesus has done – how He gave up the privilege of His power, how He used power properly in order to benefit us – are we able to live as steward leaders.

In the evening: Consecrate yourself once again to upholding justice “the least of these”, those for whom Jesus has deep compassion. Ask the Lord to give clarity to the many ways to steward well the leadership roles we fill.

Scripture Memory: Micah expressed confidence that God would plead his cause and execute judgment for him (Mic. 7:9), he could not have seen how radically and truly God would do this—by sending his own Son to have judgment executed upon him. Gospel Transformation Study Bible
Through memorizing scripture be reminded moment by moment of God's forgiveness and of the hope that he will deliver!

Micah 7:9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication. (ESV)

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH DISCUSSION

For Families and Young Children

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

1. Micah 3:9-11 is another description of the corrupt and bad leaders of Judah. These leaders were acting selfishly instead of serving the people. Ask your children if they know what it means to be selfish. God made us to be centered on Him and to bring Him glory (Isaiah 43:7). But our sin makes us center our lives on ourselves.

2. At the end of Micah 3:11, we see once again that the leaders were presuming on God's covenant love and forgetting about His justice and holiness.

- a. Ask your children if they have ever tried to play on a seesaw by themselves. Does that work? No, it does not. You must have someone else on the other side of the seesaw.
- b. The same goes for our understanding of God. We must balance His love with His holiness. Read Exodus 34:5-6 together.
- c. Their false understanding of God led to a false peace, which prevented them from repenting and turning back to God.
- d. Talk with your children about how we see God's love and justice in Jesus' death on the cross.

3. Micah 3:12 describes the coming judgment on Jerusalem. This was a tough message of judgment. Talk with your children about how a loving God uses judgment with those He loves to ultimately shape them in His image. This begins with repentance and then shows itself in faith in God.

- a. Read Romans 8:29 and 1 John 3:2 together to see God's ultimate design for us is to be re-made into His image again.
- b. If you have Play-Doh, take turns making different shapes and talk about how God shapes us.

Scriptures for further study: John 10:10, John 13:1-20,
Philippians 2:1-11, 1 John 2:4-6

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH DISCUSSION

For Students

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

1. Has there ever been a time when someone gave you some advice which you didn't take? Why didn't you take the advice? Was there a consequence for your decision either good or bad?
2. There are two types of ignorance. The kind of ignorance that is the result of a lack of education and resources. We tend to be somewhat sympathetic towards people who make poor choices due to a lack of understanding or education. The other kind of ignorance is the kind that results when someone ignores the education and knowledge they have. Are we justified in judging harshly someone who has full knowledge of a matter and yet ignores that knowledge in acts in a way that hurts others? Why?
3. How is Micah uniquely qualified to call out the political and religious leaders of his day? Read Micah 3:8
4. Micah chapter 3 is about what happens when folks do not listen to and follow God's wisdom. 3:1-4 is about what the political leaders who do not listen to God's wisdom. The passage from the sermon is Micah 3: 9-12. It is about the religious leaders who do not listen to God's wisdom. Read the passage (start at Micah 3:9). What are the ways that the religious leaders have not listened to God's wisdom? Discuss. What are the consequences for their actions?
5. Imagine that you are leading your church's youth group on a day hike on the Appalachian Trail. You see a mountain peak which promises a wonderful view. There is no trail to the peak, and there are no warning signs at the foot of the mountain. Despite the warnings regarding rapidly changing weather conditions, you lead the group towards the summit. The group reaches the top. The view is beautiful. It took longer than you imagined. The sun begins to set, and there is no clear way out. A snowstorm has rolled in and no one in your group has the proper attire. When you realize that everything has gone wrong, what are your options? Now, someone in your group calls you out and challenges your authority. What do you do? (When a prophet calls leaders out, how can they respond which will result in once again listening to the voice of God and safe leadership for God's people?).
6. Why not pray for the leaders in your school? If you are aware of someone whose life and leadership don't line up, how can you handle that?

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. Notice in Micah 3:11 how the leaders, the priests, and the prophets all had one thing in common: they were abusing their roles for the sake of making money. Money can often be a source of great temptation, a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10), and can even become destructive to our faith. And Jesus warned that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (which is the biblical term for riches or material wealth). Is it possible that money has become your god? Is it just that you have money or does your money have you?

2. Even as God was preparing to bring destruction against Judah, everything on the surface looked so good. The buildings were impressive, prosperity was at an all-time high, and the beautiful temple made people feel like all was right with God. But the Bible says the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt (Jeremiah 17:9). Is it possible that we are deluding ourselves into thinking that everything is okay with our lives when God sees it much differently? Ask God to open our eyes so that we might see as He sees.

3. The leaders thought everything was okay with their relationship with the Lord (Micah 3:11) because of their temple worship. They supposedly leaned on the Lord, and they said, "Is not the Lord among us?" But God was not impressed with their false worship. Why? Because their lives were not consistent with their worship. Real worship leads to a life of justice and mercy. If you are coming to church, great! But is your worship life disconnected or compartmentalized from the rest of your life? Are you acting one way at church, but another outside church? Are you only interested in the presence of God at church, or will you submit to Him in every part of your life?

4. These false leaders were basically using God. They were hoping that by their religious activities, they could ensure that God would be on their side, in essence using God as a kind of safeguard or an insurance policy for life. Basically, they were trying to control God. Is it possible we might likewise try to perform religious duties in order to gain God's favor, force His hand, or secure His blessings? Are we actually trying to control God? Or are we obediently allowing God to control us?